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"FOR THE PURCHASE OF BOOKS RELATING TO THE
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DICK ONSLOW

Among the Indians

BY WILLIAM H. G. KINGSTON

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PUBLISHED BY

Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, Springfield, Ohio.

No. 99 JULY 1887.

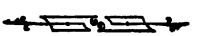
ADVENTURES

—OF—

DICK ONSLOW

IN THE FAR WEST.

By WILLIAM H. G. KINGSTON.



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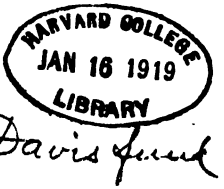

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DICK ONSLOW.

CHAPTER I.

My friends the Raggets—Our proposed migration—Journey commenced—Attack of the Indians—A shot through my leg—Horible anticipations—Hide in a bush—Climb a tree—My thoughts in my concealment—Listen in expectation of an attack—Starving in the midst of plenty—Some one approaches—I prepare a fire.

IN few countries can more exciting adventures be met with than in Mexico, and the southern and western portions of North America; in consequence of the constantly disturbed state of the country, the savage disposition of the Red Indians, and the numbers of wild animals, buffaloes, bears, wolves, panthers, jaguars, not to speak of alligators, rattlesnakes, and a few other creatures of like gentle nature. My old school-fellow, Dick Onslow, has just come back from those regions; and among numerous incidents by flood and field sufficient to make a timid man's hair stand on end for the rest of his days, he recounted to me the following:—

After spending some time among those ill-conditioned cut-throat fellows, the Mexicans, I returned to the States. Having run over all the settled parts, of which I got a tolerable bird's-eye view, I took it into my head that I should like to see something of real backwoodsman's life. Soon getting beyond railways, I pushed right through the State of Missouri till I took up my abode on the very outskirts of civilization, in a log-house, with a rough, honest settler, Laban Ragget by name. He had a wife and several daughters and small children, and five tall

sons, Simri, Joab, Othni, Elihu, and Obed, besides two sisters of his wife's and a brother of his own, Edom Ragget by name. I never met a finer set of people, both men and women. It was a pleasure to see the lads walk up to a forest, and a wonder to watch how the tall trees went down like corn stalks before the blows of their gleaming axes. They had no idea that I was a gentleman by birth. They thought I was the son of a blacksmith, and they liked me the better for it.

Some months passed away; I had learned to use my axe as well as any of them, and a fine large clearing had been made, when the newspapers, of which we occasionly had one, told us all about the wonderful gold-diggings in California. At last we talked of little else as we sat around the big fire in the the stone chimney during the evenings of winter. Neighbors dropped in and talked over the matter also. There was no doubt money was to be made, and quickly too, by men with strong arms and iron constitutions. We all agreed that if any men were fit for the work, we were. I was the weakest of the party, do you see. (Dick stands five feet ten in his shoes, and is as broad shouldered as a drayman.)

Just then, an oldish man with only two stout sons and a small family drove into the forest with a light wagon and a strong team of horses, to look about him, as he said, for a location. He came to our house, and Laban and he had a long talk.

"Well, stranger," said Laban, "I guess you couldn't do better than take my farm, and give me your team and three hundred dollars; I've a mind to go further westward."

The offer was too good to be refused. The bargain was struck, and in two days, several other settlers, having got rid of their farms, a large party of us were on our way to cross the Rocky Mountains for California. The women, children, and stuff were in Laban's two wagons. Other settlers had their wagons also. The older men rode; I, with the younger, walked, with our rifles at our backs, and our axes and knives in our belts. I had, besides, a trusty revolver, which had often stood me in good

We were not over delicate when we started, and we soon got accustomed to the hard life we had to lead, till camping out became a real pleasure rather than an inconvenience. We had skin tents for the older men, and plenty of provisions, and as we kept along the banks of the rivers, we had abundance of grass and water for the horses. At last we had to leave the forks of the Missouri river, and to follow a track across the desolate Nebraska country, over which the wild Pawnees, Dacotahs, Omahas, and many other tribes of red men rove in considerable numbers. We little feared them, however, and thought much more of the herds of wild buffaloes we expected soon to have the pleasure both of shooting and eating.

We had encamped one night close to a wood near Little Bear Creek, which runs into the Nebraska river. The following morning broke with wet and foggy weather. It would have been pleasant to remain in camp, but the season was advancing, and it was necessary to push on. All the other families had packed up and were on the move; Laban's, for a wonder, was the last. The women and children were already seated in the lighter wagon, and Obed Ragget and I were lifting the last load into the other, and looking round to see that nothing was left behind, when our ears were saluted with the wildest and most unearthly shrieks and shouts, and a shower of arrows came whistling about our ears. "Shove on! shove on!" we shouted to Simri and Joab, who were at the horses' heads; "never mind the tent." They lashed the horses with their whips. The animals plunged forward with terror and pain, for all of them were more or less wounded. We were sweeping around close to the edge of the wood, and for a moment lost sight of the rest of the party. Then, in another instant, I saw them again surrounded by Indian warriors, with plumes of feathers, uplifted hatchets, and red paint, looking very terrible. The women were standing up in the wagon with axes in their hands, defending themselves bravely. A savage had seized one of the children and was dragging it off, when Mrs. Ragget struck with all her might at the redskin's arm, and cut it clean through;

the savage drew back howling with pain and rage. Old Laban in the meantime, with his brother and two others, kept in front firing away as fast as they could load while they ran on; for they saw if once the redskins could get hold of the horses' heads they would be completely in their power. All this time several of the things were tumbling out of the wagon, but we could not stop to pick them up. Why the rest of the party, who were ahead did not come to our assistance. I could not tell. I thought that they also were probably attacked. We four ran on for some way, keeping the Indians at a respectful distance, for they are cowardly rascals—notwithstanding all the praise bestowed on them—if courageously opposed. I was loading my rifle, and then taking aim at four mounted Indians who appeared on the right with rifles in their hands. They fired, but missed, as I meantime was dodging them behind the wagon. During this, I did not see where Obed was. I hit one of them, and either Simri or Joab, who fired at the same time, hit another. The other two wheeled round, and with some companions, hovered about us at some little distance. Just then not hearing Obed's voice, I looked round. He was nowhere to be seen. I was shouting to his brothers to stop and go back with me to look for him, when half-a-dozen more Indians, joining the others, galloped up at the same moment to attack the the headmost wagon. Simri and Joab, lashing their horses, rushed on to the assisance of their family. The savages fired. I was springing on when I felt myself brought to the ground, grasping my rifle, which was loaded. A shot had gone right through both my legs. I tried with desperate struggles to get up, but could not lift myself from the ground. All the horror of my condition crowed into my mind. To be killed and scalped was the best fate I could expect. Just as I was about to give way to despair, I thought I would make an attempt to save my life. From my companions I could expect no help, for even if they succeded in preserving their own lives they would scarcely be in a condition to come back and rescue me. Poor Obed I felt pretty sure must have been killed. A small

stream with some bushes growing on its banks was near at hand. I dragged myself towards it, and found a pretty close place of concealment behind one of the bushes. Thence I could look out. The wagons were still driving along furiously across the prairie with the Indians hovering about them on either side, evidently waiting for a favorable moment to renew the attack. Thus the whole party, friends and foes, vanished from my sight in the fog. To stay where I was would only lead to my certain destruction, for when the Indians returned, as I knew they would, to carry off my scalp, the trail to my hiding-place would at once be discovered. I felt, too, that if I allowed my wounds to grow stiff I might not be able to move at all. Suffering intense agony, therefore, I dragged myself down into the stream. It was hardly deep enough to allow me to swim had I had strength for the purpose, and crawl I thought I could not. So I threw myself on my back, and holding my rifle, my powder-flask, and revolver above my breast, floated down until I reached the wood we had just passed. The branches of the trees hung over the stream. I seized one which I judged would bear my weight, and by lifting myself up by immense exertion, of which, had it not been for the cooling affects of the water, I should not have been capable, I crawled along the bough. I had carefully avoided as much as possible disturbing the leaves, lest the red-skins should discover my retreat. I worked my way up, holding my rifle in my teeth, to the fork of the branch, and then up to where several of the higher boughs branched off and formed a nest where I could remain without fear of falling off. I was completely concealed by the thickness of the leaves from being seen by any one passing below, and I trusted, from the precautions I had taken, that the Indians would not discover my trail. Still, such cunning rogues are they, that it is almost impossible to deceive them. My great hope was that they might not find out that I had fallen, and so would not come to look for me. As I lay in my nest, I listened attentively, and thought that I could still hear distant shots, as if my friends had at all

events not given in. Still it might only have been fancy. My wounds, when I had time to think about them, were very painful. I bound them up as well as I could—the water had washed away the blood and tended to stop inflammation. The sun rose high in the heavens. Not a sound was heard except the wild cry of the eagle or kite, blending with the song of the thrush and the mocking-bird, interrupted every now and then by the impudent observation of a stray parrot and the ominous rattle of a hugh snake as it wound its way among the leaves. Every moment I expected to hear the grunts and cries of the red-skins, as with tomahawk in hand they came eagerly searching about for me. I durst not move to look around. They might come talking carelessly, or they might steal about in dead silence, if they suspected that I was still alive.

I thus passed the day. I did sometimes think that I should have been wiser had I remained within the bounds of civilization, instead of wandering about the world without any adequate motive. The reflection, too, that the end of my days was approaching, came suddenly upon me with painful force. How had I spent those days? I asked myself. What good had I done in the world? How had I employed the talents committed to me? I remembered a great many things I had been told as a child by my mother, and which had never occurred to me since. The more I thought the more painful, the more full of regrets grew my thoughts. I am bound to tell you all this. I am not ashamed of my feelings. I believe those thoughts did me a great deal of good. I blessed my mother for all she had taught me, and I prayed as I had never prayed before. After this I felt much comforted and better prepared for death than I had been till then. The day passed slowly away. Darkness came on. I grew very hungry and faint, for I had no food in my pocket, and had taken nothing since the morning. Had I not been wounded that would have been a trifle, I had often gone a whole day without eating, with, perhaps, a lap of water every now and then from a cool stream. I could not sleep a wink during the whole night. At times I hoped that

if my friends were victorious they might return to learn what had become of poor Obed and me. In vain was the hope. The night wore on, the dawn returned. I tried to stretch my limbs; I found I could not move them.

The hours of the next day passed slowly by; I thought I heard the cries and shrieks of the red-skins in the distance, they seemed to draw nearer and nearer—they were entering the wood—yes, I was certain of it—they got close up to my tree—as I looked down I saw their hideous, malicious faces gazing up at me, eager for my destruction. Then suddenly I became aware that they were only creatures of my imagination, conjured up through weakness and hunger. All was again silent. "If his state of things continues, I shall certainly drop from my hold," I thought. Then suddenly I remembered that I had some tobacco in my pocket. Edom Ragget had handed it to me to cut up for him. I put a piece in my mouth and chewed away at it. I felt much better. The evening came, my apprehensions about the Indians decreased. Still I knew that if I once got down the tree, I might not be able to ascend it again, and might become a prey to wild beasts or rattlesnakes, as I felt I could not stand for a moment, much less walk a yard. Having fastened my rifle to a branch, I secured one of my arms round another, that I might not drop off, and at last fell into a deep sleep. Next morning I awoke, feeling much better, though very hungry. As I lay without moving. I observed a a raccoon playing about a branch close to me. "Although there may be a hundred red-skins in the neighborhood, I must have that fellow for my breakfast," I said to myself. I released my rifle and fired. Down fell the raccoon at the foot of the tree. "He is no use to me unless I can get hold of him, and even could I pick him up, I must eat him raw, as I have no means of lighting a fire where I am," said I to myself. While this thought passed rapidly throgh my mind, I heard a sound at some distance. It was, I felt sure, that of a human voice, I quickly reloaded my rifle, and with my finger on the trigger sat in readiness for whatever might occur.

CHAPTER II.

A friend in need—How two people may live while one will starve—Obed goes in search of adventures, and I awake to find a rattlesnake close to my nose—I am saved—Obed returns, but followed by a gentleman whose room would be more pleasant than his company—Obed cannot fire, and I cannot run, but I save him by sitting still—We anticipate the pleasure of dining on bear's flesh—Obed fetches and carries like a dog, and we fare sumptously—I take to crutches—collect stores and make a tent—A Red-Skin visitor.

I KEPT, as I was saying, my finger on the trigger, and my eye along the barrel of my rifle, fully expecting to see a Pawnee's red visage appear through the bushes. I knew that the dead raccoon would betray me; so I resolved to fight it out to the last, and to sell my life dearly. I heard footsteps approaching—slowly and watchfully I thought; I peared down out of my leafy cover; the branches of the surrounding shrubs were pushed aside, and there, instead of the feathers and red face of an Indian, I saw the honest countenance of young Obed Ragget, looking cautiously about him on every side.

"Obed! Obed! I am here," I sung out; "come and help me, lad." He sprang on when he heard my voice.

"What, Dick! is that you? Well, I am glad you have escaped, that I am," he exclaimed, looking up into the tree.

"So am I to see you," I cried; "but help me down, lad, for I cannot help myself, I fear."

"That is more than I can do," said he. "Look; the redskins have shot me through both arms, and I can no more use them than I can fly."

I now observed that he looked very pale and weak, and that both his arms hung down uselessly by his side. One thing also I saw, that as he could not manage to get up to me, I must contrive to descend the tree to meet him. Tearing, therefore,

a neckerchief up into strips, I lowered my gun and pistols down by it, and then prepared to descend myself. I made it secure, as close to the trunk as possible, and grasping the short boughs which grew out from the trunk, I threw my chief weight upon them, while I steadied myself with the line I had made; keeping my useless legs stretched out, lest I should fall on them, I gradually lowered myself to the foot of the tree. We could not shake hands, but we greeted each other most warmly. Obed complained most bitterly of thirst, for he had not moved out of the first shelter into which he had crawled, and did not know how near the stream was. I accordingly put my hat into his mouth, and told him to stoop down where the stream was deepest, and to ladle up some water. This he did, and then kneeling down I held the hat to his mouth, while he drank. I took a draught myself, and never have I enjoyed so much the choicest beverage in my fathers's house as I did that cool draught. I now pointed to the raccoon, and asked him if he was hungry.

"Very," was his answer; "I could eat that brute raw."

"No need of that," said I; "just collect materials, and we will quickly have a fire." Obed understood me, and with his feet soon kicked together a pile of sticks and leaves sufficient to make a good fire. I had a flint and steel, and we speedily had the raccoon spitted and roasting on some forked sticks before it in proper woodman's style. The food revived us both, and restored our spirits. We neither of us were inclined to despondency; still we could not help thinking, with sad feelings, of what might have befallen our friends, and what might too probably be our own fate. As Obed could not help himself, he had to sit down close to me while I fed him; and when we had done, he assisted me to remove myself away from the fire. I then dressed his wounds as well as I could, bathing them freely in cold water. Some sinews were cut through, I suspected, which prevented him moving his arms, but no bones were broken; and, in consequence of his fine constitution and temperate habits, I trusted that he would recover the use of

them. I was in a worse conditiom, for both my legs were so much hurt that I could not hope to walk on them for many weeks to come. However, my upper limbs were in good case; and we agreed that, with a pair of strong arms and stout legs between us, we might both get on very well. Obed had left his gun in the thicket into which he had dragged it when he fell. It was discharged, and so he went for it, bringing it to me in his teeth, that I might clean and reload it. As he could not use it, he left it by my side; and we had now our two rifles, and his and my revolver pistols; so that I felt, with my back to a tree, cripple as I was, I might prove a formidable adversary either to man or beast. While Obed and I sat near the fire, talking over our prospects, we remembered that a number of things had dropped from the wagons; so he volunteered to set out in order to discover whether they had been carried off by the Indians.

"Farewell, Dick," he said, as he rose to go. "If I don't come back you'll know those varmint redskins have got my scalp; but though I can't use my arms, they'll find I can use my legs before they catch me."

With many misgivings I saw him make his way out of the thicket. When he had gone I lay back with my head on my arm, thinking over the events of my past life, and contrasting them with my present condition, till at length my eyes closed, and I forgot all recent events in sleep. I believe that I slept very soundly without stirring my legs or arms. At last my eyes slowly opened, and horrible indeed was the spectacle which met them. The embers of the fire were before me, and close to it, as if to enjoy its warmth, lay coiled a huge rattle-snake not two yards away from me. In an instant of time I felt that its deadly fangs might be fixed in my throat. What use to me now were my fire-arms? I dare not move my hand to reach my revolver. I knew that I must not wink even an eyelid, or the deadly spring might be made. The snake was, I daresay, nearly six feet long. It had a body nearly as thick as my leg—of a yellowish brown color, with some dark-brown

spots reaching from one end to the other; and oh! that head, as it slowly raised its vicious eyes to have a look at me. It was of large size, flat, and covered with scales. I gazed at the rattlesnake, and the rattlesnake gazed at me. What he thought of me I do not know; I thought him a hedious monster, and wished him anywhere but where he was. It seemed an age that I thus lay, not daring even to draw a breath. I felt at last that I must give up the contest. I prayed for mercy. The oppression of my chest became almost insupportable. Still I dared not move. The deadly reptile stretched out its head—slowly it began to uncoil itself—the dread sound of its rattle struck my ear. I felt that now I must muster all my nerve and resolution, or be lost; the huge reptile stretched itself out and slowly crawled on—oh, horror!—it passed directly over my wounded legs! Not a muscle quivered. I dared not look up to ascertain whether it was gone. A minute must have elapsed—it seemed to me a much longer time; and then, and not till then, a shout reached my ear. It was the voice of Obed. Probably the snake had heard it, and it was that, I have no doubt, which made him move away under the belief that I was a dead person, who at all events could do him no harm. My first impulse was to look round to discover what had become of the snake. He was nowhere to be seen. My next was to turn my eyes in the direction whence the shouting proceeded. There I saw Obed rushing along as fast as his legs could carry him among the trees.

"Be ready with your rifle, Dick," he shouted at the top of his voice; "not a moment to lose, man."

I fully expected to see half-a-dozen red-skins following close at his heels, and resolved to defend him to the last, and to sell my own life dearly, although I had to fight on my stumps, when the boughs of the trees were torn away behind him, and a huge bear appeared, grinning horribly, in a great rage, and evidently prepared to do mischief to somebody or something. Had Obed been able to use his arms, he was the last person to have placed another in danger for the sake of trying to save

himself. Now, however, he had no choice but to run behind me and the fire. Bruin trotted on, growling angrily He was one of those long-headed, small-eyed fellows, with pointed nose, clumsy body, and smooth, glossy, black hair, which have a fancy for pork and ham, and will put their paws into a corn bin if they find it open. When he got near, he reared up on his hind paws for a fight, and came on towards me, I grasped my rifle and aimed at his head. If I missed him I should scarcely have time, I feared, to seize Obed's rifle before he would have been upon me. I knew that his body was so encased with fat that it would be difficult to wound him vitally through that. I fired: the bullet hit him in the head, but still he came on, gnashing his teeth. I lifted my second rifle. I could not well have missed him had I been standing up or kneeling, but sitting, as I was, it was difficult to take a steady aim. He was about ten paces off; again I fired. I felt sure I had not missed, but with a terrific growl he bounded on towards me. I had barely time to grasp a revolver when he was close up to me. Already I left his hot breath in my face; his huge claws had hold of my limbs; he was trying to clasp me round the body, his muzzle, with its sharp teeth, touched on my shoulder. Poor Obed, who standing behind me, unable to render me assistance, litterly shrieked with fear, not for himself, but for me. In another moment I felt that I must be torn to pieces. I mustered all my nerve. It was much wanted. I waited a moment till I could aim steadily at his head. I fired. He gave me a terrible hug. It was his death grapple. As it was, it very nearly squeezed the breath out of my body. Then he rolled over and lay motionless. I did not roll after him; but, lest he should be a shamming 'coon, I dragged myself as far off as I could to reload my weapons.

"No fear, Dick, he's dead," cried Obed, joyfully. "Well, you're a friend at a pinch, as I always thought you."

It would not have been in his way to express his thanks by more than this, still I knew by his looks that he was grateful to me. In reality I had only fought in self-defence, so I do not know that he had anything to thank me for.

"Old Bruin will afford us many a good dinner, at all events I hope," said I. "And do you know, Obed, you and the bear saved my life just now between you." And then I told him how his shouts had, I believed, scared away the rattlesnake. "So you see, old fellow, we are quits."

Obed having ascertained by a hearty kick that Bruin was really dead, I attached my rope to his waist and then to the bear, and by its means we dragged his carcass a little way from our camping ground. He then came back and helped me along that I might cut some steaks for our supper. We cooked them in the same way we had done the raccoon. While the operation was going forward he gave me an account of his adventures. He had found a number of things which had fallen from the wagon, and, wonderful to relate, they were untouched. There was the skin tent which we had not put into the wagon, and a cask of flour and one of beef, and, what we thought of still more value, a bag of bullets and some small shot, and a keg of powder, besides another rifle and an axe; while further on he said there were several other smaller articles along where the wagon had gone. It was close to the cask of flour he had encountered Bruin, who had undoubtedly been attracted to the spot with the hope of appropriating it. One prize Obed had brought with him in his mouth; it was a tin saucepan, and very valuable we found it. Our difficulty was now to collect these things. Obed offered to try and drag them together to one spot, if he could manage to hook himself on to them. That day we could do nothing; so that after he had collected a large supply of firewood, we placed our backs to a tree and commended ourselves to the care of that great God who had so mercifully preserved our lives. We agreed that one should watch while the other slept, and most faithfully did we keep our pledge to each other. Several days passed without any great variation in our mode of proceedings. We cut the bear up into thin slices, and dried them in the sun. Obed also went round about the wood and drove in the wild turkeys, raccoons, squirrels, and other small game, which I shot. We were thus supplied with

meat. There were also plenty of herbs, the nature of which both he and I knew, and which, though not of delicate flavour, were wholesome, and helped to keep us in health. The weath- also was very fine, and thus several days passed away. At last I bethought me that if I could make a pair of crutches, I might, with Obed's help, get over the ground. Two young saplings, towards which I dragged myself, were soon cut down, and in a couple of days I was once more upright. I could only at first move very slowly, and with great dread of falling; but by constant practice, in the course of a week I thought I might venture out of the wood. Obed's arms were also gaining in strength, and one of them he could already use a little, and was thus enabled to help me. I slung the rifles over his back, and, sticking the revolvers in my belt, off we set together. We moved slowly, but still we went ahead. At last we reached the tent. It struck us at once that it would be well to pitch it where it lay on our old camping ground. Wherever we might be Indians would find us out, so that it would make no difference whether we were in or out of the wood, and we might see either emigrants to California moving west, or the post to one of the forts, and thus obtain assistance. Obed and I soon put up the tent. I sat down, and he made his shoulders serve as a prop, while I stuck in the pole, and thus, in a few minutes, we had a comfortable roof over our heads.

While we were at work, it struck me that if I could make a sort of sleigh, it would facilitate the operation of bringing in our goods. I set to work immediately, and in the course of two days, manufactured a machine which answered our purpose. The season was advancing, the nights were getting cold, and there was no time to be lost in collecting the articles which we might require to preserve our lives through the winter, should no one, before it set in, pass that way to rescue us. Accordingly, we once more proceeded on our expedition. Sometimes I walked on my crutches, and at others Obed dragged me on the sleigh. Certainly we were a notable example of the advantage of two people working in concert. Alone we must

have perished; together, though injured so severely, we were able to live and comfort each other. We never had even the slightest dispute; and though surrounded by difficulties and dangers, and anxious about our friends, we were far from unhappy. I have often thought that if people who are living in the midst of all sorts of luxuries and advantages would but follow the example of Obed Ragget and me, they would be much the happier.

Our first care was to get the kegs of powder and shot, for our stock was almost exhausted; and with those, and a bundle of blankets, we returned to our tent.

To make a long story short, in the course of a week we had collected every thing to be seen; and had settled ourselves very comfortably in our new home. We also surrounded our tent with sticks of firewood, which would serve as a barricade should we be attacked, at any time, by the red skins.

The exertion we went through, however, had fatigued us excessively, and opened our wounds afresh; so that for some days we were unable to quit the precincts of our tent. We had made ourselves beds by placing sticks close together on the ground, and covering them with leaves, over which we spread our blankets, and we agreed, as we lay stretched out on them, that we were much better off than many poor fellow who had not beds to lie on. I crawled out occasionally to light the fire, and to cook our food, while Obed had to go to the river to get water. To prevent the necessity of doing this so frequently, after we were both a little rested, we emptied our beef cask, and carried it down on the sleigh to the river, that we might fill it with water. This being done, we found that we had overcalculated our strength, and had once more to take to our beds. Several days more passed away during which we scarcely moved. Obed, too, had become very silent. I saw that something was passing in his mind. After a time I asked him what it was.

"Why, Dick," said he, "I'm thinking that though we seem to have a good supply of food, it won't last two hungry fellows all winter, even if we were to put ourselves on half allow-

ance. Now my arms will soon be well, and if I could make my way to one of the forts, I might bring you assistance. I'll take a supply of powder and shot and keep my eyes open to look out for the red-skins. What do you say to it?"

I told him that I did not like the idea of his running so great a risk for my sake.

"Oh, don't fear for me," he replied; "it's right that it should be done, I'm certain of that, so I'll do it."

I said nothing more. I knew when Obed thus expressed himself, he was in earnest. Several more days rolled slowly by. We slept a good deal in the daytime; perhaps under our circumstances it was the best thing we could do. One afternoon I had been asleep some time, and Obed was snoring away on the other side of the tent, when I opened my eyes, and there I saw, glaring at me through the doorway of the tent, the hideous countenance of a red-skin warrior, horribly covered with paint and decked with colored feathers. While with his left hand he lifted up the curtain, in his right hand he grasped his tomahawk, which quivered with his eagerness to take possession of our scalps.

CHAPTER III.

The Red-skin proves to be a friend—He and Obed leave me alone in my glory—I fortify myself for the winter—Visited by wolves—A terrific storm—The wolves my nightly visitors—I kill some and eat them, but find them o'er tough—An object moving in the distance—Red-skins and enemies—I prepare for their reception—I kill one of them—A fearful struggle—I endeavor to obliterate the signs of this visit—My terrible solicitude—More wolves and more Indians—I prepare a banquet for them—The suspicions of my guests aroused—The unpleasant termination to our feast.

OBED and I were not easily taken by surprise. Our hands instinctively clutched our rifles, and in a moment the breast of the Indian was covered by their muzzles. The eye of the red-skin did not quail—not a limb trembled. He gazed on us calmly, and his hands continued to hold aside the skin which formed the door of our tent, while he spoke a few words in a low, quiet voice. I could not understand him, but Obed did.

"Don't fire, Dick," said Obed; "he is a Delaware, a friend to the white men. Come in, friend Delaware, take your seat by our fire, and tell us what has brought you here," continued Obed, addressing the Indian.

The Delaware, letting drop the skin door, came in, and, stirring up the embers of our almost extinguished fire, sat himself down on a log of wood placed before it. He spoke a jargon which he thought was English, and which both Obed and I understood, but which I cannot now repeat, any more than I could convey an idea of the deep guttural tones of his voice. They seemed to come from the very depths of his inside.

"I travel alone," said the red-skin. "I have a long journey to perform, to carry a letter I have undertaken to deliver at Fort Grattan. I was beginning to despair of accomplishing it, for my powder had been destroyed, and thus food was diffi-

cult to obtain. When I first saw the smoke of your fire, I thought it might come from the wigwams of some Pawnees, and my heart bounded when I saw from its appearance that your tent must belong to white men." From this hint given Obed at once placed a supply of food before the Indian, who did ample justice to it. We then lighted our pipes and all three sat smoking over the fire. The Delaware urgently advised us not to attempt to spend the approaching winter in that place, but to accompany him to the fort. I saw the soundness of his counsel, but assured him that I could not attempt to walk half-a-dozen miles, much less could I hope to make so long a journey.

"Then it is better that one should come and bring back succor to the other than that both should perish," urged the Delaware. To this I agreed and told Obed he must go. He had been ready to go alone when the risk was greater; but now he did not like to leave me. I met all his arguments, and telling him that if he wished to save my life, as well as his own, he must go, I ultimately made him consent to accompany the Delaware. Before starting they took every means to increase my comforts. They filled the water casks, collected a quantity of herbs, and a supply of firewood, and shot as much game as I could consume while it was fresh. The Delaware laid down to sleep that night in our tent. I was convinced from his manner and mode of speaking that he was honest. I never saw a man sleep more soundly—not a limb stirred the whole night through; he looked more like a dead person, or a lay figure, than a being with life. Suddenly, as the morning light broke through the tent, he sprang up, and, shaking himself, in a moment was all energy and activity. "Ugh! I have not slept so soundly for many a night, and may not sleep so soundly for many a night more," he exclaimed, in his peculiar dialect. We lighted our fire, boiled our kettle, and then all three sat down to a hearty breakfast. It was the last I should probably take in company for many a weary day; still I resolved not to be downhearted, and especially to preserve a serene and contented countenance.

The Delaware replenished his powder flask, and taking a small supply of provisions, he and Obed bade me farewell. I could only wring the latter's hand; I don't think we exchanged a word at parting. I watched them as their forms grew less and less, and finally disappeared in the distance, and then indeed I felt very lonely. Perhaps there was not a human being within a hundred miles of me except the two who had just gone away; or should there be, he was very likely to prove an enemy. The idea of being thus alone in a wilderness was grand, but it was somewhat appalling and trying to the nerves. How long would Obed be absent? I thought to myself. Three weeks or a month at the shortest. Could I manage to preserve existence for that length of time? I was still weak and ill, and could scarcely crawl about, so I spent a greater portion of my time on my couch. I placed my fire arms close at hand around me, so that I might seize them in a moment. My fire-place was a hole in the middle of the tent, almost within reach of my skin-covered couch; there were no linen sheets to catch fire; my tub of water was near it, and my stock of provisions hung overhead. The sky I saw whenever I looked out had for some days given indications of a snow-storm. It came at last and winter set in. The drifting snow soon found its way through the minutest hole in the tent skins. To prevent this I beat it down firmly all round the edge, stopping every crevice, and raised a pile of logs before the door. "I don't think *I* should mind a fight with a dozen redskins," I thought to myself; "but those wolves—I don't like them." The wolves I dreaded (and with reason) found me out at last. The wind was roaring and whisling among the leafless trees, the snow was beating against my tent, and the night was dark as Erebus, when a low distant howl saluted my ears—heard even above the tempest. It continued increasing, till it broke into a wild chorus of hideous shrieks. I had no dread of ghostly visitors. I would rather have faced a whole array of the most monstrous hobgoblins than have felt that I was surrounded, as I knew I was, by a herd of those brutes—the wolves.

Till almost morning they continued their ugly concert; but they have a natural fear of man, and it is only when pressed by hunger that they will attack him. The ground, however, was now completely covered with snow, and I knew that they would find but little food. As I could not venture out, most of the day passed away in a half-unconscious dreamy state; part of it I slept. The next night I was awakened soon after dark by the wolfish chorus; it was much nearer than before. The sounds formed themselves into words to my disordered senses. "We'll eat you up; we'll eat you up ere long," they appeared to say. A third night came. The pack seemed increased in numbers, as if they had been collecting from every quarter. I fancied that I could hear their feet crackling on the crisp snow as they scampered round and round the tent. That night they brought their circle closer and closer, till I fully expected that they would commence their attack. Still they held off, and with the morning light took their departure. I watched the next night setting in with a nervous dread. As soon as darkness spread over the snow covered face of the country, on the horrid pack came, scampering up from all quarters.

Nearer and nearer approached the cries and howls. They commenced as before, scampering round the tent, and every time it seemed narrowing the circle. I knew that they must be closer to me. I stirred up my fire with a long stick I kept by me for that purpose, and I felt sure I saw the impression of their noses as, having smelt me out, they pressed them against the side of the tent in their endeavors to find an entrance I looked for the biggest bump, and took aim with my revolver. There was a lond snarl and cry, and then a shrieking and howling as the horrid pack scampered off into the distance. I had to get up and patch the hole made by my bullet, but I did not look out to see what had become of the wolf I had hit. I heard the animals howling away the livelong night in the distance. They did not, however, venture back again that night.

I had now been ten days alone, as I knew by a small bag I kept, into which I every day, when I awoke, put a bean. I should completely have lost all count of time without some such contrivance. The cold was becoming very bitter; still my health was improving, and I felt myself stronger than I had been since I was wounded. The perfect rest had tended to cure me. I thought that I would get up and walk about, to recover more completely the use of my limbs. It was necessary to replenish my stock of water before the stream was completely frozen over, as snow-water is not considred healthy for a continuance. I had plenty of clothes and skins, and I required them, for a piercing wind blew across the wild prairie, which, unless thus protected, I could not have faced. The exercise did me good. I now went out every day, constantly returning to feed my fire and warm myself. I replenished my stock of water, and got a further supply of wood, that I might not run short of that necessary article. I was most concerned about my provisions, which were diminishing sadly. I therefore always took my rifle out with me, in the hopes of getting a shot at a stray buffalo or deer going south, but all had gone; none passed near me. The woods, too, were now deserted; not a bird was to be seen; even the snakes and the 'coons had hid themselves in their winter habitations. A dead silence reined over the whole country during the day. I wish it had equally reigned during the night. Daylight and smoke of my fire kept the wolves away, but night after night they came back and howled as before. I used at last to sleep some hours every day, and sit up all night with my pistols by my side, ready to shoot them. Now and then the grinning jaws of one of them would force its way in at the entrance of the tent. I seldom passed a night without killing one or two of these intruders. I every morning cut off what I thought would prove the tenderest portion, and dragged the rest of the carcass away. I would not, however, advise anybody to feed upon wolf's flesh if they can get anything better. More tough and nauseous morsels I never attempted to swallow; but it was necessary to economize the rest of my provisions.

I one day went out as usual to exercise my limbs and look for a chance shot. There was a fine clear sky overhead, not a breath of air was stirring, and my blood was soon in circulation. I felt more up to anything than I had done for some time. I reached the only elevation in the neighborhood, near the bank of the creek, when, turning my glance round on every side, I saw in the far distance toward the northwest, two specks on the surface of the dazzling expanse of white spread out before me. I watched—the specks were moving, they might be deer, or they might be wolves, but from the way they progressed I had little doubt they were men. They came from a quarter I did not like, inhabited by Dacotahs and Pawnees—treacherous, thievish rascals, who will take the scalp of an old woman, if they can catch her asleep, and make as much boast of it as if they had killed a warrior in open fight. Still it was necessary to be on my guard against them. I waited till I ascertained without doubt that they were human beings, and then hastened back to my tent, made up my fire so that a smoke might be seen coming out at the top, put a buffalo robe inside my bed to personate myself, and loaded myself with all my fire-arms. I then carefully closed the entrance of the tent, and stepped back over the marks I had previously made, till I reached the banks of the stream, where I found ample shelter behind a clump of thick bushes. I lay there between two heaps of snow with my rifle ready, perfectly concealed, but having a clear view of my tent and the country beyond. Should the strangers prove to be friends, as the precautions had given but little trouble it was wiser to take them, but if enemies they were necessary. When they were still a long way off I made out that the strangers were redskins. Their costume showed me that they belonged to the tribes I have mentioned, and I had no doubt that they had come with hostile intent. They stopped, and I saw by their gestures that they were forming their plan of proceeding. One was an oldish man, the other was a tall active lad; either would give me considerable difficulty to manage if it came to a hand-to-hand struggle.

They were armed only with bows and arrows and spears. They pointed to the smoke, and the elder signified that I was asleep within, or cooking my dinner. He then fixed an arrow in his bow, and by his gestures I suspected that he was saying he would shoot me through the tent covering before I had time to seize my fire-arms or see my enemies. "I'm much obliged to you for your good intentions, but I will try and frustrate them my friends," said I to myself. The elder of the two redskins now approached the tent with his bow drawn, ready to send an arrow into the inmate should he appear at the entrance; the other searched carefully around the tent and examined the traces of my feet in the snow. He seemed apparently satisfied that the owner had gone to the stream and returned and was within. The two now got still nearer to the tent, with their bows drawn; so cautiously did they tread that not a sound could be heard. They stopped, and eagerly shot several arrows through the covering, one after the other as rapidly as they could fix them to the strings of their bows. "And so you think that you have killed your prey," said I to myself, but at the same time a sickening sensation came over my heart. I had never shot at a human being with the intention of taking away life: I must do so now or become the victim myself. The savages listened. Of course no sound from within reached their ears. The elder stooped forward to draw aside the curtain to look in while the other stood ready with his spear to transfix the person who they might expect would attempt to spring out if he had not been killed. Now I thought I must fire. I took aim at the older redskin. In doing so the barrel of my rifle touched a twig. The younger savage in a moment detected the sound; he turned full on me. His quick eye caught sight of my rifle as I instantly brought it to bear on him. He uttered an exclamation of astonishment. It was his last. I fired, and he fell with his face forward. His companion sprang up and was about to rush towards me, but I pulled the trigger of my second barrel and he too fell writhing in agony on the snow. I rushed up to my tent. The younger savage was quite

dead; the elder glared at me fiercely. Though badly wounded still he might live. I leaned over him and made signs that I would take him into my tent and try and heal him. A gleam of satisfaction came over his countenance—I thought it was from gratitude at my mercy. I was preparing to drag him into the the tent, and to place him on my own couch. I felt that I was doing what was right ; should gain a companion in my solitude, perhaps make a friend, who would enable me to escape from my perilous position. His eyes followed me as I moved about making the necessary preparations. He beckoned me to come and lift him up. I was putting my arm behind him when his right hand drew a long knife with a flash from his belt, and before I could spring back he had struck twice with all his force at my breast, wounding me severely. It was not his fault that he did not pierce me to the heart. So firm a grasp did his other hand retain of my collar that I could not escape him. I had my own hunting-knife beneath my buffalo robe, my fingers clutched it, and, as catching his right arm I pressed it to the ground, I struck two or three blows with all my might at his throat and chest, I felt his fingers relaxing; his arm fell back—he too was dead. I would rather not dwell on that awful moment. The horrors of my solitude were increased ten-fold. Still I was obliged to rouse myself to action. I knew not how many of the tribe to which the dead men belonged might be in the neighborhood.

That evening, however, I could do nothing. Night was coming on, and the blood which trickled down my breast reminded me that I must attend to my own wounds. If my former nights had been full of horrors, this was far more dreadful. The wolves howled louder than ever, and came round me in greater numbers, and though I was continually firing my pistols out into the darkness, I could scarcely keep them at bay. I will not dwell on that dreadful time. The morning did come at last, and the first thing I did was to drag the bodies of the savages down to the river, and to force them through the hole in the ice whence I had been accustomed to draw water. The

current quickly carried them down into far off regions. Then I made a fire over the spot where their blood had been spilt, and happily during the day a heavy fall of snow coming on obliterated all the remaining traces of their fatal visit to my tent still for many a day I could not drive the picture of their hideous countenances out of my head, as they lay stark and stiff on the ground, killed by my hand—yet never was homicide more justifiable. I had, as I believed, got rid of all the traces of the savages outside the tent. When I found the arrows sticking inside it in my bed, it did not occur to me that it would be equally necessary to get rid of them. The whim seized me of keeping them as a memorial of my escape. Instead, however, of concealing them under the bed, I arranged them in the form of a star on the tent covering just above my head, and every time I looked at them I felt grateful that they were not sticking in my body. I have a dislike to dwell on the horrible sensations which came over me during those long winter nights and dreary days. Had I possessed any books they would have served me as companions, and helped me to pass the time; but I had none.

My own thoughts and feelings were my only associates, and they often were far from pleasant ones. I had a great temptation also, which, had I given away to it, would have made matters worse.

Among the articles which had fallen from the wagon, and which Obed and I afterwards picked up, was a small cask of brandy. We were both of us very abstemious, or we should not have been the strong hearty fellows we were. The cask, therefore, had not even been broached. The tempter, however, now came suggesting to me that I might soon forget all my miseries if I would but occasionly take a taste of the fire-water. I resisted him, however, I knew that if I once began I might go on, and not know when to stop. I was sure I was better and stronger without liquor of any sort, so I let the cask remain as it was in the corner of the tent. I had a pipe and a small quantity of tobacco, which I mixed with sumach leaves

and willow bark to make it go further. Smoking this was my greatest animal pleasure. My usual dinner, eked out with fried wolf's flesh, indeed required a smoke to make it digest properly. After this adventure with the redskins I found my nerves much shaken. I staid in bed for a couple of days, but whenever I dropped asleep I found myself acting the whole scene over and over again. At night I had, as usual, to sit up, wrapped in my buffalo robes, with my feet at the fire, and my pistols in my hands, keeping the wolves at bay. Oh, how I did wish they would cease their horrid serenade. The old year passed away, and the new began, but there was no change in my condition. I was growing seriously alarmed about Obed, he ought to have been back by this time, I thought. I was afraid some accident might have befallen him, for I was very certain that he would not have deserted me. By degrees I recovered my composure, and took my exercise with my rifle in my hand as usual. My tent also, by being almost covered up with snow, had become a very warm and comparatively comfortable habitation, as I could always keep up a good fire within it. When I returned from my walks I had a cup of warm tea ready, which tended to keep up the circulation which the exercise had established. Thus I soon got into very good health again.

My chief occupation when out was looking for game. What was my delight one morning to see a flock of prairie-hens sitting on some boughs not far from my tent. I stopped like a pointer. I knew that the slightest movement might scare them away; and lifting my rifle to my shoulder, I selected a fine cock. I fired, and over he tumbled. I ran forward, and secured him to my belt, I marked where the others settled, and followed them up. Thus I went on. I had killed three, I think, which would prove a most satisfactory addition to my larder When I looked about me I found that I had got a long way from my tent. I walked briskly back. When I got to the top of the bank near the river, what was my dismay on looking northward, to see several persons approaching my tent.

They could not have failed to have discovered me. I watched them with intense interest. They were redskins—Dacotahs probably; I could not possibly avoid encountering them. I felt that my only prospect of safety was to put a bold face on the matter, and go and meet them frankly.

Hurrying to my tent I loaded myself with all my fire-arms, resolving to sell my life dearly, and then walked forward towards them. I counted the strangers. There were ten of them, all painted and dressed for war; and a very ferocious set they looked. They seem very much astonished and puzzled at seeing me. In an instant they all had their arrows fixed in their bows, and, forming a line, they thus advanced slowly and cautiously, keeping an eye on the tent, and evidently expecting to see a number of people emerge from it. Their demonstrations were so hostile that I now began to repent that I had not made an attempt to defend myself; at the same time I felt that a contest with ten cunning savages would have been a very hopeless one. Flight, too, over the snow, with little knowledge of the country, was not to be thought of. As the savages advanced I retreated, resolving to make a stand at my tent door. At the same time I tried to show by signs that I could if I liked, kill two or three of them, but that I was ready for peace if they were. At last I lowered my rifle from shoulder, and they unstrung their bows and advanced with outstretched hands towards me. Knowing their treacherous character, however, of course I could not depend on them. I bethought me that the best way to win their friendship was to offer them food, as is practiced in civilized communities with some success; so I showed them the birds I had just killed, and intimated that I was going to dress them for their entertainment. I produced several other dainties and my dried wolf's flesh. I also brought out some of my mixed tobacco, though it was with intense reluctance I parted with it. They expressed their satisfaction by several loud grunts, and then squatted round in a circle outside the door of my tent. I made up my fire and soon had the prairie-hens and several pieces of meat roasting

on sticks before it, and a savory stew cooking in my pot. I trusted that I might be able to replenish my scanty stock of provisions, but I knew that had I not given them with a good grace, my guests would probably have taken them by force. I had begun to serve the banquet, at which the redskins were smacking their lips, and they were casting approving and kindly glances at me, when I remembered my cask of brandy. I knew that this would completely cement our friendship, but I intended to give them only a little at a time to run no risk of intoxicating them. I retired, therefore to the back of my tent for the purpose of drawing off a little in a bottle. While I was thus employed, one of them put his head into the tent to see what I was about. As he did so, his eye fell on the star of arrows over the head of my couch. A loud exclamation made me turn round. I saw where his glance was directed. My folly and want of forethought in a moment flashed across my mind. All was lost, I perceived. The savages sprang up and seizing me, pointed to the arrows. I had nothing to say. Perhaps the expression of my countenance betrayed me. Several held me tight while the others spoke. Though I did not understand a word of their language, I could not fail to understand the tenor of their speeches. Their actions, the intonation of their voices, their angry glances showed it. "Our friends came here, and this man killed them. We came to look for them, and by the same arts with which he destroyed them he has endeavored to destroy us. There are the proofs of his guilt. How else did he become possessed of those arrows?" Such, I have no doubt, is a very concise abridgment of their harangues.

They continued speaking for an hour or more, till they worked each other up into perfect fury. Their eyes gleamed at me with malignant hatred. They foamed at the mouth; they gnashed their teeth at me. I thought they would have torn me limb from limb; but they were reserving me for a far more refined system of torture. Having condemed me to death they lashed my hands behind me, and my feet together, and

placed me in a sitting position on my bed, there to await my doom, while they all crouched down round the fire, where, stern and grim, they finished the repast I had prepared for them in horrible silence.

CHAPTER IV.

The Indians propose to kill me—I am bound ready for the torture—My guests find the fire-water, and I find the advantage of having abstained from it—A fearful conference—A tomahawk sent at my head—The spirits take effect—I work my limbs free—Shall I kill my enemies?—I fly—A run for life—My terrible journey—I sink exhausted—A friendly Indian—A kind reception—I have some cause to rejoice that I did not redden my hands with blood.

THE redskins sat round the fire, devouring with dreadful composure the remainder of my scanty stock of provisions. I could not withdraw my eyes from them. I felt as if I was in a horrid dream, and yet I was too certain of the reality of what had occurred to doubt it. "Even were they to spare my life, I must starve," I thought to myself, "so it matters little what they do to me. They ate up all their own food and all of mine, till nothing remained. The Red man, although he can go a long time without food, is a complete glutton when he gets a quantity, and is utterly regardless of what may be his future exigencies. When they had eaten up all the food exposed to view, they began to hunt about the tent for more. I watched them anxiously, for I was afraid they would get hold of the gunpowder, and still more did I dread their finding the brandy.

The chief, a villainous-looking old warrior, was the most active in the search. He went round and round the tent, poking his fingers into every package, and sniffing up with his nose, till at last his keen scent enabled him to discover the existence of the spirit cask, which I had already broached. With a grunt

of satisfaction, in which the whole party joined, he dragged it forward and made signs to his followers that all should share in the much prized fire-water. I trembled at what would be the consequences. "They would have treated me badly enough while they were sober, but with all their evil passions inflamed by liquor, they will be perfect demons," I thought to myself. "How wrong I was not to have let the dangerous spirit run out long ago." How brightly their eyes glared, how eagerly they pressed forward to get a share of the coveted fire-water, which the old chief was serving out. I observed that he took more care to help himself largely than he did anybody else. Scarcely had they drank off what was first distributed to them than they put forward their leathern drinking-cups to ask for more. The old chief having helped himself, gave some to his followers. Then their eyes began to glitter, the calm sedate bearing of the Indian was thrown off, they talked rapidly and vehemently, and laughed loudly, and their fingers began to play with the handles of their tomahawks and scalping-knives in a way that made my blood run cold. The redskins, when they take a captive for whom for any reason they have an especial hatred, generally wait two or three days, that they may have the satisfaction of tormenting him before they commence actually to torture him to death. As I watched them, however, I felt that any moment they might spring up and begin to torture me.

It is difficult to describe the horrible ingenuity they exhibit in torturing their victims. Talk of the virtues of the savage —I do not believe in them. He may have some good qualities, but he is generally the cruel remorseless monster sin has made him. Civilization has its vices—I know that full well—and bad enough they are, but they are small compared to those of the true unadulterated savage, who prides himself on his art in making his victims writhe under his tortures, and kills merely that he may boast of the number of those he has slaughtered, and may exhibit their scalps as trophies of his victories. It is a convincing proof to me that the same spirit of evil, influenced by the most intense hatred to the human race, is going contin-

ually about to incite men to crime. The Dyak of Borneo, and the Fijian of the Pacific, and the red savage of North America, are much alike; and identically the same change is wrought in all when the light of truth is brought among them, and the Christian's faith sheds its softening influence over their hearts. Many such ideas as those I have alluded to passed through my mind as I sat, unable to move, watching the proceedings of the savages, and I felt with a pang of intense remorse how utterly I had neglected doing anything towards sending the gospel of salvation in which I believed and thought I trusted, to them or any other of the heathen nations of the world.

The redskins went on talking fast and furiously; then they put out their hands, and called on the old chief to serve them out further draughts of their loved fire-water. He dared not deny them. He helped himself, and his eyes began to roll round and round with a frightful glare, and every now and then they turned upon me, and I thought my last moment had come; but one of his companions, in a tone which had lost all respect for him, called off his attention for a moment, and I had a reprieve. It was but for a few minutes. I became once more the subject of conversation. Again the cups were filled and quaffed. I sat as motionless as a statue. A sign of fear or even of consciousness, would only tend to enrage my captors. The countenance of the old chief grew more terrific. He grasped his deadly tomahawk, and drawing it from his belt, lifted his arm to hurl it at my head. I expected that instant to feel the horrible crash as the sharp weapon entered my skull. I, notwithstanding, fixed my eye steadily upon him. He bent back his arm; the tomahawk flew across the tent, but the spirits he had swallowed had unnerved his limbs and confused his sight, and, unconsious apparently of what he had done, he rolled over on his side. His companions were too far gone to take notice of his state. They rather seemed to rejoice at it, that now they could help themselves to as much liquor as was to be got. As the savages went on drinking, and I saw the condition to which they were reducing themselves, hope once

more revived in my breast. I might work my way out of the leather thongs which bound me, and get clear of my captors; but then where was I to go? I was again tolerably strong, and could run some miles, but in what direction should I bend my steps? I could scrape together a little food from that left by the redskins; but had I any chance of reaching any fort or settlement in the dead of winter? I should, too, probably be frozen to death, or be devoured by wolves, or be scalped by hostile Indians. The prospect was not cheering. Still all risks were far preferable to being tormented to death by my present captors. I was beginning to indulge in a prospect of escaping, remote though it might be, when two more of the redskins all of a sudden took it into their heads to hurl their hatchets at me. It was the last effort of expiring intelligence, and they both fell back overpowered by liquor. In a very short time, one by one, the rest of their companions yielded to its influences, and the whole band of savages lay perfectly drunk and helpless at my feet.

No time was to be lost; how long they might continue in that state I could not tell. At all events it was important to get a long start of them. I found that I might in time gnaw away the thongs which bound my wrists. I set to work; they were very tough, but by perseverence I got through one, and then the other, and my hands were free. Still I had a tough thong round my neck, secured to one of the posts of the bed, and another round my ankles fastened to another below me. If I attempted to stoop down, I tighened the thong round my neck, nor could I draw my feet up to meet my hands. The savages had taken my own knife from me. I struggled and pulled, and tugged, to get my feet clear till I almost cut through my ankles to the bone. At last I thought of the tomahawks the savages had thrown at me. I leaned back and felt about behind me. To my great joy my fingers clutched the handle of one, the blade of which was sticking deep into the frame of the bed. I dragged it out, and very soon cut through the thong round my neck. To clear my feet was a work of less

trouble, I was free. I can scarcely describe my sensations as I stood among my now helpless enemies. My first thought was to make preparations for flight. I collected all the food of every description and packed it away in a bag which I fastened round my waist. I took my rifle and filled my power-flask, with a further supply in a leathern case which had been Obed's. and all the percussion caps, and as much shot as I could carry. I took the precaution also of collecting all the bows and arrows and other weapons of the Indians, and of piling them upon the fire. where they were quickly consumed. Then I threw over my shoulder my buffalo-skin coat, and stood prepared for flight. "Whither shall I fly? How can I escape from my swift-heeled enemies with all this weight of things to carry? Need I fly?" A dreadful thought came into my head. "They intended to kill me. There they lie utterly helpless. A few well directed blows from one of their own tomahawks which they hurled at my head, and not one of them can harm me more. I may dispose of them as I disposed of their two brethren who tried to kill me. I have a right to do so. Surely I have a right to destroy them." If I did not say, I thought all these things. Whence did the suggestion come? "Oh may I be guided to do what is right," I mentally ejaculated. I gazed at the helpless beings scattered around me. "They are human. 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.' What does that mean?" I asked myself. "Oh, no, I dare not injure them. Never mind what the rough backwoodsman would say to my conduct. I am sure it is braver to refrain than to kil.. Certainly as a Christian, I cannot kill them. I dare not. "To His guidance and protection who formed the world and all living creatures, I commit myself." With these words, not daring to look behind me, I rushed from the tent.

I took a westerly course, for I thought that I should more likely fall in with Obed in that direction should he have reached the fort in safety, and succeeded in obtaining help to come and rescue me. On I went as fast as I could move, but my limbs

were stiff, and the weight I carried was considerable. I tried to turn my thoughts from the savages, but I could not help calculating how long they might continue in their state of stupor. There was still some brandy left in the cask; when they recovered their senses, rather than pursue me they might be tempted to drink again. It was a question which was the strongest passion, whether the love of drink, or the desire for revenge would prevail. On I went, the snow was now tolerably hard, so I made pretty good progress, yet the redskins would go twice as fast when once they began to pursue me. I went a mile before I stopped. Then on reaching an elevation, whence I could have a clear view over the white glittering plain, I looked back at the spot where I had spent so many days and nights of pain and suffering, and where also I owned that I had been most mercifully preserved from so many dangers. The tent stood where it had been for many months, the smoke was curling out of the top into the calm sky, and all around looked so unchanged that I could scarcely persuade myself that in the interior was collected a band of malignant foes, who would rejoice in my destruction. I looked but a few seconds, and then away I went on my course. I walked on, sometimes breaking into a run where the snow was harder and would allow it, till sunset, and then the stars came out brightly in the firament of heaven, and I was able to steer my course with greater certainty even than in the daytime. I could not think very much; but I did feel thankful that I had not yielded to the temptation of drinking the spirits myself, when I had felt low and almost helpless. Had I done so, I should have destroyed the very means presented for my deliverance. I got over the plain with tolerable ease, for the sun had at times melted the snow, which when it froze again had become hard and rough. As I ran on, however, I was trying to devise some plan by which the savages might be turned off my track. To obliterate it, however, was hopeless, unless a heavy fall of snow should come on, and even then the cunning rascals, by scraping away the snow at intervals, were very likely to find me out. It was nearly mid-

night, I calculated, when I felt that I must stop to rest and take some food. I sat down on what I took to be a mound of earth covered with snow. I ate a handful of rice and a little biscuit and chewed a piece of wolf's flesh, and felt somewhat revived. I should have liked to have gone to sleep, but I dared not, even for a moment. It would have been, had I given away to the feeling, the sleep of death. I scarcely know why, but as I sat on the heap I struck the butt-end of my rifle into the snow; it gave way. I found there was something beneath it. With eager haste, for I remembered that every moment was precious, I threw off the snow. The body of a man lay beneath. A dreadful sensation came over me. For it must be that of Obed, slaughtered, perhaps, on his way to succor me; the idea almost overcame me; I resisted, however, the feeling of despair, and roused myself up. I threw off more of the snow; I could see, by the faint light of the moon, that little more than a skeleton remained; the dress, however, was there; it was that of a backwoodsman. With horrible eagerness, yet with loathing, I examined the tattered clothes. I felt sure that they were those Obed had worn. In my search my hand struck against something; I took it up, it was an old silver watch; such a one Obed had not got, but often had I seen it in the hands of his brother Joab. Poor Joab, then, had been killed on the first attack of the redskins. What had become of the rest of the party? I dreaded lest I should find their remains as I had that of Joab. Taking the watch I secured it about me, to restore to his family should I ever meet them. I hunted about for his rifle; it was nowhere to be found. It had been carried off, I concluded, by the redskins. With a heavy heart I ran on, after my brief rest, expecting every instant to come on more of the remains of my old friends, but I saw no indications of them, and there was no time to carry on the search. I went on after this for some time without even halting for a moment. I had now been several hours on foot. Had I enjoyed my usual strength, such as I possessed before being wounded, I should have made light of the fatigue. I was,

however, again obliged to sit down. I reckoned on having a long start of the redskins. I hoped to retain my strength so as to redouble my speed when I thought they would be pressing after me. I had deprived them of their arms, and they had no food; so that, could I contrive to keep beyond their reach for two or three days, they must be delayed to obtain it, if they attempted to follow me. Unless also their lodges were in the neighborhood, and they could go and get arms, I possessed another very great advantage over them. Of course if pursued I would not hesitate for a moment about shooting them down. These ideas occurred to me as I ran on, and I began to feel that my case was not so hopeless as I at first considered it. My great dread was of the wolves. As yet I had not heard any of those cries which make night hideous in the desert regions; but I knew that if a pack once sented me out and gave chase, I should have little chance of escaping them, unless I could find a tree, up which I might climb out of their way.

I ran on all night, keeping nearly due west, and daylight found me pursuing my way with unflagging speed. At last I struck what I took to be a branch of the Nebraska river. A wood was not far off on the other side. "I'll try if a white man cannot manage to deceive the acuteness even of a redskin," I thought to myself. The wind had blown the snow completely off the ice on the river. I crossed the river and made towards the wood. I stirred up the snow in a way which I knew would puzzle the redskins, and then treading backwards on my footmarks, I once more reached the river. Then away I went up the stream over the smooth ice as hard as I could run. Now and then I tumbled down, but I quickly picked myself up again, and was off as fast as ever. When a man believes that a body of redskins or a pack of wolves is at his heels, he is likely to run pretty fast. I sat down once for breakfast for five minutes, and once at noon for dinner off raw rice and wolves' ribs, and away I went again. At last I found that the river was making so many bends that it would be necessary to land, which I did on the north shore. Night came on, but I

did not relax my speed; the stars came out and guided me as before. I was beginning, however, to feel much distressed. I bore up as well as I could, but I fancied that I could not continue my course much beyond the morning, even if I could go through the night. I came to some bushes growing above the snow; they would afford me shelter from the wind, and I might venture to rest for half-an-hour or so. I should have wished to build a fire, but I dared not, lest the smoke might betray me. I sat down and began searching in my bag for some food, when a distant and faint cry struck my ear. I listened; again I heard it. I knew two well what it was. The cry of a pack of wolves. Could they have gained scent of me and be following in my track? The bare thought of such a thing made me start up, and again set forth at full speed. For what I knew to the contrary, I had both wolves and redskins following me. The wolves were gaining on me, that was certain. Their yelps and barks could be distinguished through the still midnight. They might yet be some way off. I tried to pierce through the gloom ahead in the hopes of seeing some clump of trees rising out of the snowy plain in which I might take shelter. On I ran. At all events it would not do to stay where I was. The sound of those horrid yelps, if anything had been required to make me exert myself, would have added fleetness to my feet. I longed for day; I thought they would be less likely to attack me. For a whole hour I ran on; but it seemed more like three or four with those dreadful sounds ringing in my ears. I thought they were coming nearer and nearer. At last I saw some object rising up before me in the darkness. It might be a distant hill, or it might be the outline of the wished-for wood. "But if I succeed in reaching it and climbing a tree, will not the delay enable the redskins to overtake me?" I thought. "I will keep outside the wood till the near approach of the brutes compels me to climb a tree to get out of their way." I kept to this resolution. What I had seen proved to be a wood. I skirted it and continued my course. All the time I kept listening with a feeling of horror

to the hideous chorus of the wolves. Suddenly I was conscious that the sounds were growing fainter. In another twenty minutes I was certain of it. They were in pursuit of some wild beast or other, perhaps of some unfortunate redskin traversing the prairie. How thankful I felt when the sounds altogether ceased. This circumstance gave me fresh courage. I pursued my course steadily onward. I stopped even five minutes to rest and take a little food. The sun rose, still I was going on but I began to feel that nature would not hold out much longer. I felt a dizziness in my eyes, and my knees began to tremble, and my breath came with difficulty. I was again in a vast plain. The sun was behind me; I followed my own shadow. Sometimes I could distinguish nothing before me, then the giddiness went away. Suddenly, as I looked up, I saw before me eight or ten figures moving in a line across my path. Could they be the Pawnees who had lost my track, and were thus making a circuit in the expectation of coming on it? If they were, I would defend myself to the last. I felt for my rifle, and tried to get it ready to fire, but I had miscalculated my own strength. The agitation was too much for me; I stumbled blindly forward a few paces, and then sank down helplessly in the snow. I tried to rise—to move—I could not, so I gave myself up for lost, and prepared for death. I was not afraid, I was not unhappy; indeed, I had no very acute feelings whatever, and very soon lost all consciousness. I was aroused by a human voice.

"Why, stranger, where have you dropped from! You seem to be in a sad plight?"

I looked up to discover whence the voice came, and there instead of a white face, as I expected, I saw a tall Indian, as he seemed by his dress, though perhaps he was rather fairer than his people usually are, bending over me. I could not reply, but, with a sort of hysterical laugh, I made signs that I had come from the eastward, and that some one was in pursuit of me.

"Well, never mind talking now; we must first set you on

your feet again," he said in a kind voice. "My companions will be here presently. You want food and rest, and then you can tell us what has happened."

"Food, food," I whispered.

"Yes, poor fellow, you shall have it," he answered, in a tone of commiseration, taking from his wallet some pemmican, which I ate with a keen relish. The food revived me, and I felt much better by the time my new friend's companions came up. They stood round me while I continued eating, with looks of pity and wonder on their expressive countenances. I saw by their dress and appearance that they were Ottoes, a tribe dwelling to the south of the Nebraska, and always friendly to the whites. My friend was the only one who could speak English, which he did perfectly. He saw me examining his countenance.

"I am half an Englishman," he observed. "I am called John Pipestick. My father came from Kent, in the old country, I have often heard him say: the garden of England he called it. A poor place for buffaloes and wild turkeys, I should think, so it would not suit me. He sometimes talked of going to have a look at the hop fields and a taste of its ale, but he was killed by the Pawnees, who carried off his scalp. I've not left him unavenged though. My mother was a redskin, and belonged to this tribe, and I have no wish to quit them. But come, friend, you have done eating, and a man who can eat is not in a very bad way. Lean on us, and we will take you to our tents. They are not more than three miles off."

Supported in the arms of the kind Ottoes, I walked along with tolerable ease. They were very fine fellows. One was fully six feet six inches in height, and proportionately strong limbed. The rest were not much his inferiors. John Pipestick was shorter, but very strong. As I walked along I found my tongue loosed, and I gave a succinct account of what had occurred. John interpreted. The Indians pricked up their ears, and had an animated discussion among themselves. We reached at length what is called a cedar swamp in the States

The cedar trees form a dense tangled thicket, perfectly impervious to the wind, and in winter, when the moist ground is frozen hard below, such a location is very healthy. Woe betide the unfortunate wretch who has to take up his quarters within one in the summer time, when mosquitoes and rattlesnakes abound. He will wish himself well out of it before the morning. Drawing aside a few boughs, the Ottoes led the way by a narrow path towards the centre of the thicket, and we soon found ourselves in an open space, in which were pitched a couple of tents. Several women and three or four men came out to greet us, and warmly shook my hands. I felt truly, as John Pipestick had called me, a brother among them. They placed me in a tent before a fire, and gave me warm food, and chafed my limbs, and then covered me up with a buffalo robe. I quickly fell asleep, and never have I slept so soundly in all my life, or with a sense of more perfect security. At last I awoke; I had not stirred for fourteen hours. It was night, but the Indians were sitting up round the fire cleaning their arms. They seemed highly pleased when I awoke.

"We have been waiting for you to start on an expedition," exclaimed John Pipestick. "How do you feel? Are you able, think you, to walk?"

I got up and stretched my limbs. They felt a little stiff and pained me slightly, but I thought, I said, that exercise would take that off.

"No fear then," said John; "take some food. Our people are anxious to start. I'll tell you all about it as we go along." I lost no time in putting on my moccasins and in getting ready for a start, after I had partaken of some pemmican and a warm broth, of which a wild turkey formed the chief ingredient. I found a party of ten Indians besides Pipestick, all armed with rifles, besides hatchets and knives, and some had likewise bows and quivers of arrows at their backs. In their buffalo-skin coats they looked very like a troop of bears. The remainder of the party were preparing to follow with a light wagon, in which they carried their tents and provisions, and four little

shaggy ponies to drag it. I saw that we were taking an easterly course. I asked where we were going.

"To your tent," was the answer.

"But the Pawnees will have gone," I remarked.

"No fear of that while any liquor remains," he observed. I knew I might as well have spoken to the winds as have attempted to dissuade my wild friends from attacking their enemies. Still I tried to explain my view of the case. John seemed much struck by what I said. He observed that he had never seen it in that light before. He had been taught to do good to your friends, but to injure your enemies to the utmost of your power. He had no notion that such was not the Christian's creed. His father was a Christian; so was he—not that he knew much about religion. That was all very well for people who lived in towns. I tried to show him that all men had souls, that one Saviour died for all; that all would have to stand before the judgment-seat of God; and that therefore religious faith and religious practice were essential for all. Such was one of the many subjects of our conversation which beguiled our way. My long solitude had made me reflect and remember many things I had before forgotten, and my late merciful escape had not been without its effects in turning my heart to my Maker. I wish that I could say that, like the compass, it has ever since kept true to the pole. I did not feel, however, that I was making very deep impressions on my auditors. We pushed on, not as fast as I had come, but still at a very rapid rate; and if I at all showed signs of flagging, two of the huge Indians would lift me up by the shoulders and help me along, scarcely allowing my feet to touch the ground. We camped in a wood for a short time, making an arbor with fir branches to keep off the cold, and then on we went. My heart beat quick as soon after daylight, we approached the height whence we could look down I knew on my tent. We reached the spot—the one where I had been standing when I saw the Pawnees coming to destroy me. I looked eagerly for the tent. It was no longer there, nor was there a sign of living beings near. Two scouts went

down to examine all the places of concealment near. After a time they signed for us to approach. We hurried down. There lay the remains of the tent, almost burned to pieces, and among a confused mass of cinders and various articles which the tent had contained, lay scattered about the blackened and mangled remains of my late captors. "Verily let not man attempt to avenge himself," I repeated. "Here is a proof of those solemn words, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay'."

CHAPTER V.

I have cause to rejoice that I did not avenge myself—My great medicine work—I rise in the estimation of my new friends—An Indian encampment—Am offered a wife, but compelled to decline the honor—John Pipestick—Surrounded by enemies—A fierce attack—We fight with desperation, and resolve to die like brave men.

THE disappointment of my Ottoe friends was very considerable when they found all their enemies killed, and not even a scalp remaining to carry off as a trophy; besides which, a large portion of the property contained in the tent had been destroyed. There was still enough, however, to be looked upon as a valuable prize by the redskins, and I accordingly begged them to appropriate it. This they without any show of reluctance did, and immediately set to work to hollow out a large hole under the snow where they might bury it. How thankful I felt that my hand had refrained from slaughtering these poor wretches when they lay in my power. As I considered the subject, I had no doubt of the cause of the catastrophe. After the savages had consumed the cask of spirits they had fallen on the barrel of gunpowder, probably hoping that it might contain more of their favorite fire-water. They were very likely smoking at the time, and perhaps all bending round the cask in their eagerness to get some of its contents. A spark from one of their pipes must in an instant have finished their existence. I cannot say that I indulged in any sentimental grief at what had occurred. It was vexatious to lose so many things which might have been of use, but the most serious loss was that of the gunpowder. Fortunately, however, I had a good supply, which would last for some time. I never was addicted to burning gunpowder uselessly. The warriors proposed to await the arrival of the rest of the party where we

were, but I entreated them to return to meet their friends. I pointed out to them that perhaps other bands of Pawnees might be moving about—probably, as I found was the case, suffering from hunger; and that first their wives and those with them, and then we ourselves, might be overpowered. John Pipestick translated what I said, and finally they were persuaded to follow my advice. They laughed very much when I proposed to bury the remains of the dead men, and replied that it would be just as well to let the wolves perform that office, which in the course of another night they certainly would do. They found quite enough labor, indeed in concealing the remains of my property. After they had dug the hole they deposited all the articles within, and then built up a pile of logs over it, which even an inquisitive bear would have had some difficulty in pulling to pieces. My chief anxiety was now about Obĕd. I got the Ottoes to describe to me exactly the position of their village, about a hundred miles to the south-east of where we then were. Then I took one of the sticks which had served me for a crutch, and making a split in one end, I stuck the other deep into the ground. On a leaf which I tore from my pocket-book I wrote a brief account of what had occurred and where we were going, and putting it into the cleft of the stick, bound the whole securely up. The Ottoes looked on with intense wonder at my proceedings, till John told them that I was performing a great medicine work, which satisfied them. Having thus done my best to enable Obed to join me, I set off with my friends to return to their camp. I paused again for an instant when I reached the summit of the hill to take what I hoped might be a farewell look at the place which had been the scene of so much suffering to me, and lately that of so dreadful a catastrophe. A small black patch on the dazzling white plain alone was perceptible to mark the lonely spot. I turned from the contemplation of the melancholy scene, and hastened after my friends. I found them moving very leisurely along. I urged John to persuade them to go faster. I could not cast from my mind the notion that more parties of Pawnees, Dacotahs, or

other hostile tribes might be about, driven out by hunger to forage in the neighborhood, and were very likely to attack them. I had therefore what I might have called a presentiment that my friends were in danger. I am not generally influenced much by such sensations. Certainly I was more liable to be so at the present moment than at any other. I do not deny the existence of such an influence, but still I cannot help thinking that it is caused by our reason, which tells us that such a thing is likely to happen. Sometimes it does happen, but often, probably we find that we are mistaken. My red friends had an idea that the stick I had placed in the ground had something to do with the matter, and that I was positively informed of what was about to occur, so hurried on faster than I found agreeable. My feet had become very sore from previous exercise, and whenever we came to soft places they sunk into the snow, the thick cake of ice above cutting my ankles almost to the bone. Sometimes I felt that I must stop, but I was anxious to help my new friends, and I knew it would never do even to appear to flag on such an occasion. I had won their admiration by the powers of endurance I had hitherto exhibited. They especially admired me for killing the two Pawnees and for escaping from their comrades; though they could not understand why I had not destroyed the whole gang when I had the power of doing so, and of adorning my belt with their scalps. I saw, therefore, that it would be very disadvantageous to me to run any risk of being lowered in their estimation. John Pipestick and and one of the Indians remained with me, while the others went on faster ahead; but exerting myself to the utmost, we pushed on to overtake them. Besides the idea which I had originated that their friends might be attacked, hunger induced them to move at a rapid rate; for they brought but a scanty supply of provisions with them, and they had no means of cooking the rice found in the tent. We were passing a wood when I stopped my companions, for my eye had fallen on several prairie-fowls sitting on the boughs of one of the outer trees a little ways off.

"We should have no chance of hitting at this distance," said John Pipestick.

"Stay then, I will try what my rifle can do," I answered; and creeping carefully up till I got within easy range, I settled in my mind which bird I should fire at with my first, and which with my second barrel. I let fly, down tumbled a bird, and the next barrel was even more fortunate than the first, for two birds were brought to the ground. Both my companions warmly expressed their delight. I had established my fame as a first-rate shot, and had, moreover, provided the whole party with a meal. Knowing how welcome we should be, my companions helping me along, we pushed on, and at length overtook our friends, preparing to camp for half an hour or so in the thicket, that they might be the better able afterwards to pursue their course, I need not say that the game I brought was thankfully welcomed, and very quickly cooked and consumed. I found that the Indians were growing anxious at not by this time meeting with the rest of their party, and they were about, while resting, to hold a consultation as to what course to pursue. We were soon again in motion, night or day made no difference to us. On we pushed. It was about noon when, on reaching a height, we saw a thin light smoke curling up into the pure intense blue sky, from the bottom of a pine-clad ravine below us. All appeared to rest in perfect peace and quietness, and I began to be ashamed of my nervous anxieties. I was greatly afraid that I should lose my influence with my friends, and as my predictions, or rather warnings, had not been verified, I should in future be looked upon as a false prophet.

"There are our friends, most probably," said John Pipestick; "but we don't proceed as carelessly as you people from the east are apt to do. We shall send out scouts and approach cautiously, lest our enemies devise some means to destroy us. Such a thing has been done before now. Those left in an encampment while the rest have been out hunting have been attacked and slaughtered, while their enemies have taken posses-

sion of their tents, and dressed and painted themselves like those they have killed. There they have remained till the hunting party have unsuspiciously returned, perhaps a few at a time, and thus all in detail have fallen victims. It was a clever trick, but we should deserve to die if we allowed it to be repeated on us."

While John was speaking, three of our party, making a wide circuit, crept cautiously forward towards the edge of the ravine, so that they might look down and see what was going on below. We meantime lay down behind some bushes so as to be completely concealed, the chief only keeping watch, that he might direct us to act according to circumstances. I could not help admiring their caution, though it was very tiresome to wait in the cold instead of being within their warm tents. At last the chief gave the sign for us to proceed. I started up, prepared to meet the enemy I expected. We advanced towards the edge of the ravine and began to descend, when we caught sight of the tents pitched at the bottom of it, the smoke issuing forth from the apertures in their summits. I inquired of John Pipestick if all was right.

"Yes, all right," he answered; "no enemies have come; they may perhaps though; but we shall not remain here many hours."

The scene was very different from any I had for many weeks set eyes on. By the side of what I knew was a stream were three tents. Each was formed of some eighteen or twenty long slender rods, the butt end stuck in the ground, in a circle, and the tops bent over to meet each other, forming the framework of the habitation. Over this was stretched a covering of buffalo skins, very neatly sewed together with thin strips of leather, and secured so firmly at the foot with pegs, that it was as tight as a drum, and capable of throwing off any amount of rain, or the snow melting from the heat within. The hides, being tanned white, had a very neat and tent-like look. I cannot say much for the cleanliness inside, but I have been compelled in my wanderings to put up in dirtier places, and that is

all I can say in their favor. These habitations are much more substantial than the wigwams of the Canadian Indians, which are formed in a conical shape by uniting at the top a dozen straight poles stuck in a circle in the ground, and by covering them thickly with birch bark. In both cases a hole is left at the top to serve as a chimney. Inside the tents of my present friends the ground was spread with mats all round the edges, except in the center, where a bare spot was left for the fire-place. Many of the tribes differ in the way of forming their cooking-place, and often the only means of ascertaining whether friends or foes have encamped on the spot, is by an examination of the place where they have lit their fires. The cots for the babies, and the pots and pans, and bows and arrows, and fishing spears, and buffalo tongues, and bear's hams, with numberless other articles, are hung up to the tent rods, and often garnish them rather oddly. As we approached the tents, men, women, and children hurried out to meet us, and welcomed us warmly, all eager to hear our adventures. But Indians are not addicted to rattling out news, as is our habit in the old country, so they had to wait till various ceremonies were gone through first.

The old chief invited me into his tent, an honor John advised me not to refuse, and then having sat down before his fire, and taken off my outer coat and my torn moccasins, his woman-kind hooked out of a huge pot hanging from the center over the fire, a lump of bear's flesh, and several other dainties, the exact nature of which I could not at first learn. Curiosity prompted me to inquire, by holding up a piece of the meat between my thumb and fingers, when a respectable old dame, whom I took to be his spouse, replied by a "bow-wow-wow," by which I rightly guessed that it was a bit of a young puppy. A few days afterwards a deep "bow-wow-wow" showed me that I was dining off an older animal of the same species. I cannot say that I had any repugnance to the meat, for after living on wolves' flesh for so long it was to me a delicate luxury. I objected rather to the quantity than to the quality of

the food placed before me, for the old chief—*Waggum-winne-beg* was his name, at least it sounded like that—wishing to do me unusual honor, gave me a double allowance each time he stuck his stick into the pot. I expressed my gratitude as well as I could, and pointed first to my chest and then to my throat, to show him that I thought the food must have got thus high; but he only laughed, and kept on helping me as before. At last I stuck a piece in my mouth, and pretended that I could not get it down further; but he was too good an anatomist to be so taken in, and offered to get a ramrod to help me down with it. "Now, old fellow," said I, getting savage, "it may be a very good joke to you; but more I will not eat, and that's enough." Luckily John Pipestick coming in, explained that though Englishmen eat as much as any Indians, they were in the habit of taking several moderate meals during every day throughout the year, and that the Indian fashion of one day gormandizing, and for many days starving would not suit them. I was not sorry to find that my friends were almost as much tired as I was, and that they would remain another whole day to rest. During the day, however, I received a piece of information from John Pipestick which somewhat discomposed me. I found that the old chief, my host Waggum-winne-beg, proposed bestowing on me one of his daughters to become my wife. Now, although I had no dislike to the notion of matrimony, I had a decided preference for a wife of my own color and style of education. Miss Waggum-winne-beg was a very charming young lady, I had no doubt, and could dress a puppy-dog to perfection, and could manufacture moccasins unsurpassed by those of any young damsel in the tribe, and embroider with colored grass, or make mats of great beauty; indeed, I cannot enumerate all her accomplishments and attractions. Still she had not won my heart; and indeed, a wife, whether white, or red, or black, would have been very inconvenient while I was leading my present wandering style of life; I gave this as the best reason I could think of for not accepting my host's generous offer; but he laughed at my scruples, and replied that I should find a

wife very useful, as she could work for me, and carry my gun and baggage of every description; that she would also cook my food and make moccasins and tent covering, and weave fringe for my leggings and other garments, and manufacture the mats and various requisite utensils. Indeed it would be difficult to find, in any part of the world, so accomplished a young lady, or one more industrious and obedient; that I might always beat her as much as I liked, if I found her either idle or disobedient.

I begged Pipestick to explain that, however good the customs of the redskins were—a point I did not wish then to dispute—those of the English differed from them; that there were a few idle, lazy, good-for-nothing fellows in England, among the chiefs, who looked out for wives with fortunes, and among the lower classes, who made their wives work for them, but it was the pride and endeavor of all true braves to secure the means of supporting their wives, either through inheriting a fortune from their ancestors, or by the exertion of their own strength and talents, and that this latter way was considered the most honorable. This was the method I proposed to follow, and before I could accept the peerless daughter of the chief, I must procure the means of supporting her. Pipestick did not exactly understand the reason I gave for declining the chief's offer, but he explained them as well as he could. I was rather posed when the chief remarked that, though he approved of them highly, he would waive all such arrangements in my case, and that he would supply his daughter with ample goods and chattels for our use. To this I could only reply that I was highly flattered by his preference, but that it was against my medicine to avail myself of his offer; that I was an Ottoe at heart; that I loved the Ottoes, and would fight for the Ottoes, and that the time might come when I should be an Ottoe indeed; but that, at present, my medicine did not show me how that was to be accomplished.

The name of the young lady, the subject of this long conversation, was, I found, the "Firefly," and certainly, as I watched

her light figure, decked with red feathers and garments with red trimmings, I thought she was very appropriately so called; at the same time, I did not for one moment indulge the base idea of accepting the chief's offer. My earnest desire was to find my way back, as soon as possible, to the society of civilized men. I was heartily glad, then, when, once more, our tents were struck, and we continued our journey. As we traveled with women, children, and a wagon, our progress was much slower than when we had gone alone. Often it was hard work getting the wagon through the snow. Generally the poor women had to drag it; and I rather scandalized the red warriors by putting my shoulders very frequently to the wheel and pushing on behind. Pipestick said that it was considered very derogatory to the dignity of a warrior. I said that I thought it might be disagreeable to the inclinations of an idle rascal; but that chiefs in my country never let their wives do any hard work at all, and that I could not bear to stalk on ahead with only my rifle at my back, while the poor creatures were toiling away in that fashion. I suppose Pipestick translated my remarks correctly, for the chiefs tossed their heads and afterwards had a very long talk about the matter. I saw that they began to look at me as a sad republican, and to suspect that I purposed introducing mutiny into their camp.

At last we reached the spot where I had spent so many weeks of suffering and anxiety. Scarcely a particle of the remains of the Indians were to be seen, but a few scattered bones and torn bits of garments. The things hidden by the Ottoes were untouched, so they dug them up, and I having added a few words to the paper in my medicine stick, as I called it, we proceeded on our way. We encamped four or five miles off that night, and the next day made good very nearly fifteen miles. The tents were pitched on the lee side of a wood, where there was but little snow, and the air was comparatively warm. All hands, that is to say the women and children, were soon employed in gathering sticks for our fires, and in digging up hickory nuts. It was the chief occupation of the men in the

evening, as they sat round the fire, to crack and chew these nuts; the taste indeed was pleasant. The camp was not left altogether without some fortification. The wagon was placed in front, and some logs of half-rotten timber were dragged out, and served to fill up the space left open in the little nook in which the tents were ensconced. John Pipestick had a tent as his own, but he came to the old chief's tent, where I had been asked to take up my abode, to act as interpreter. We sat up till a late hour, cracking nuts and telling very long-winded stories, which, as Pipestick occasionally interpreted them for my benefit, took up a double portion of the time, and were not especially interesting. I was not sorry, at last, to find myself comfortably covered up by a pile of buffalo skins, with the prospect of a sound sleep till daylight. How long I had slept I do not know, when I was awoke by the barking of one of the dogs, then by another and another, till the whole tribe were in full yelp, in every key, from full bass to double treble. The old chief sprung off his couch, so did I, and as we rushed out of the tent, we found all the warriors standing on the elert, and with their rifles in their hands, peering out into the darkness. Two or three advanced cautiously into the wood, the dogs following at their heels yelping furiously, till they were summoned back by those in the camp. I tried to discover the cause of the alarm, but could discover nothing over the white plain spread out before us. If there were enemies, they were in the wood; but to see them was impossible. We waited for the return of the scouts. There was a complete silence; the howl of the wolves had ceased; not a night bird disturbed the quiet of the night. Suddenly a piercing, terror-inspiring, unearthly shriek was heard ringing through the quiet wood. Directly afterwards the feet of one of the scouts, as we supposed, were heard rushing through the wood. It was one of our companions. The whirl of a dozen tomahawks flying after him showed how closely he was pursued, as he broke into the encampment, crying out, "The enemy are upon us, the enemy are upon us!" What made the suspense more trying was that

not a foe could be seen. We had no doubt that they were in strong force, and that the two other scouts had been surprised and slaughtered by them. Probably the wood swarmed with them, yet I did not see a sign of fear among any of my friends. Old Waggum-winne-beg was in his element, and he was ably seconded by John Pipestick. To send any more scouts into the wood would have been perfect madness; so, each man sheltering himself as best he could behind trees and bushes, and logs of fallen timber; we waited in silence for the attack. Some time passed away.

"I wonder if it is a false alarm," thought I. "Still if it is so, what has become of the scouts?" I whispered to Pipestick that I thought it might be a mistake.

"Not at all," was the answer; "wait a bit. If ever you shot well, shoot well now, if you care for your scalp."

The advice had scarcely been given, when there arose a sound close to us, more hideous and terrific than I ever before heard in my life. The redskin's war-whoop was heard above all. I turned my head for an instant to the east. The first faint streaks of dawn were appearing in the sky. Through the pale light thus afforded I could see a number of dark forms flitting about among the trees, while they kept up a continued discharge of arrows and darts. Now and then a musket-ball came whizzing by us; but it was very evident that the greater number of our assailants were armed only with bows and arrows; at the same time there could be no doubt that they very far outnumbered us. This would prove of serious consequence should they come to close quarters. Redskins, however, are not fond of close quarters, unless they can take an enemy by surprise, which our dogs and scouts had prevented their doing in our case. I do not think it is fair to call them cowards. Their notions are altogether different from ours, and they consider stratagem and deceit as the chief art of warfare. They have no notion of risking their own live, if they can by any other way destroy their enemies, and they consider white men as committing the height of folly when they stand up and ex-

change shots with similar weapons in a duel. I don't know that they are far wrong. Our assailants having tried to shake our nerves by their shrieks and showers of arrows, appeared to retire, and again the whole wood was wrapped in perfect silence. It was but of short continuation. Once more those unearthly shrieks and cries broke forth, and this time they were echoed by our people, who kept their muskets ready, and the moment an enemy appeared, flitting from one tree to another, did not fail to fire—with what effect I had not time to observe. I felt that I was bound, on every account, to take an active part in the fight, and kneeling down behind a log of timber, I loaded and fired as rapidly as I could, whenever my eye caught sight of the dusky form of an Indian warrior. I did not often miss, but I suspected that I inflicted more wounds on the limbs than on the bodies of our enemies.

"Who are they, think you?" I asked of Pipestick, who was at my side.

"Dacotahs or Pawnees," he answered. "They have had scouts on our trail for some time probably. When they discovered that their friends were destroyed, they thought that we had done the deed, and have come in force resolved to be revenged."

It appeared to me that we might as well have tried to shoot down all the trees in the wood, as to destroy our enemies. They swarmed round us like hornets, seemingly resolved, as John observed, to cut us off to a man. I turned my eye to the right, a band was just emerging on that side from the wood, and the same minute I saw another coming out on the left, in a long line, evidently for the purpose of surrounding us. I picked off two or three fellows as the flew over the snow, but so rapid and eccentric were there movements, that it was no easy matter to get a fair shot at them, especially as all the time we were assailed with showers of arrows. Some were sent from too great a distance to do us much harm; but at the same time they not a little distracted us. Others again had more deadly effect. Some of our people were struck down; two were killed

outright, the arrows passing right through their bodies; while several were more or less injured. I happily had hitherto escaped unhurt, and so had Pipestick; but the old chief was wounded in the arm, and one of the poor little children was killed in spite of the protection its mother attempted to afford it. This made me feel more bitter than anything else, and yet such an incident is but a too common consequence of warfare.

The old chief proved himself well worthy of the dignity bestowed on him. By word and gesture he animated his people to fight bravely, and to resist to the last; and every time they raised one of their war-whoops, he led the chorus, which these returned with no less vehemence. Still, as I considered the matter, I began to apprehend that we were completely in the power of our vindictive enemies. While we were inside our entrenchments, they knew it was more prudent not to come to a hand-to-hand encounter; but if we attempted to move onward we should be instantly surrounded and cut down. The Dacotahs had enough men to keep watch and watch, and to tire us out. Had we been a party of men alone, we might have cut our way through them; but of course, with the women and children that was impossible. As long as the powder lasted we might keep them at bay; and thus all we could do was to hold out bravely, and to hope that some turn might occur in our favor.

The cold grey dawn was just breaking, when with shrieks and whoops louder, more terrific than ever, numbers of savages rushed out of the wood, closely pressing round us. To count how many there were was impossible, for they flew here and there, and sprang about in a most wonderful way, and then on they came in a body towards us. Several of our people were knocked over, and as I saw the hideous fellows flourishing their tomahawks and scalping knives, I began to feel a most painful sensation round the top of my head. The old chief stood boldly at his post, picking off his enemies as they drew near, while John Pipestick did no dishonor to his father's

land or the men of Kent. I did my best to reduce the number of our foes, but it was of little avail, and in another instant we were engaged with overwhelming numbers, in a desperate hand-to hand conflict. I looked round; not a ray of hope appeared, and thus like brave men we resolved to make our foes pay a heavy price for our lives.

CHAPTER VI.

Our powder expended—I believe that my last moment has arrived—Unexpected succor--A dangerous predicament--Obed's gallantry--Our enemies take to flight--We recommence our journey--Generosity of the old chief--Offers me two wives instead of one--Obed's narrative--How we escaped from the bear--A fresh alarm--The approach of a stanger.

THE infuriated Dacotahs thronged thickly around us, uttering the most horrible yells and shrieks, those in the distance plying us incessantly with their arrows and darts, while those in the front ranks kept whirling their tomahawks above our heads, watching for an opportunity to send them crashing down upon our skulls. Not a shot was heard; our rifles were useless; all our powder was expended. We fought as men driven to desperation generally will fight; for none of us had, I am sure, the faintest hope of escaping with our lives; for my part, I fully expected that the next moment would be my last. Old Waggum-winne-beg had received a desperate wound on his shoulder, and had been beaten to the ground; the gallant Pipestick had been brought on his knee, and I found myself without support on either side just as a gigantic chief with uplifted battle-axe made a desperate rush at me. I raised the butt-end of my rifle, which had hitherto done me such good service, to parry the blow, but I felt conscious that it would not avail me. I was in the power of my vindictive enemy. I saw the keen edge weapon glittering in the first beams of the rising sun, as the glorious luminary of day appeared above the snow-covered plain; I felt as if in another instant it would come crushing through my brain, when the sharp crack of a distant rifle sounded in my ear, and I saw my enemy leap up in the air and fall dead at my side, his axe missing my head and just grazing my arm. I eagerly looked forth in the direc-

tion whence the shot had come, to discover, if I could, by whom I had been preserved. I could as yet see no one, but I observed that our assailants were influenced by some disturbing cause, and were gathering together in the northwest, as if to prepare for resisting some expected attack. Still those near us seemed resolved to gratify their vindictive feelings by destroying us if they could before our unknown friends could come to our aid. I had little doubt that the party who had appeared so opportunely to relieve us must, by some means or other, have been collected by Obed; and I prayed heartily that it might be of sufficient strength to at once put our enemies to flight. I had little time, however, to think about the matter. The Indians pressed us harder than ever, and scarcely a man of us remained unwounded, while many of the poor women were hurt. The rest of the women fought with as much fierceness and desperation as the men. Yet I felt that in spite of all the heroism which had been exhibited, and in spite of the aid which was so close at hand, our lives would be sacrificed. Again the Dacotahs gathered thick around us; I could not restrain myself; I shouted loudly for help, though I scarcely expected it to be sent; my shout was replied to by a hearty cheer, and nearly a dozen white men, followed by three times as many Indians, broke through the masses of our enemies with sword and battle-axe and club, and beat them down or drove them back, shrieking and howling with rage and fear. One figure I recognized, more active than the rest, making his way towards me. It was that of Obed.

"Hurra, old feller, hurra! I am glad you are safe, that I am," he shouted, as he sprang over the barricade, and grasped my hand.

"But we must drive these varmint away, or shoot them down, every mother's son of them, or they will be gaining heart and coming back on us—Come on, lads; come on—hurra, hurra!"

Uttering these shouts, he again leaped out of our encampment, and, beckoning on his followers, they were all once more

in pursuit of the flying enemy. Just as he went, Obed handed a powder-flask and a bag of bullets.

"You'll want them, boy, I guess; and I have plenty," said he, as he flew off.

I was about to join him, when I found my limbs refuse to perform their office. The moans also of old Waggum-winnebeg, John Pipestick, as well as others of my companions, made me feel that I must stay where I was, both for the sake of attending them and of guarding them should any of the Dacotahs who might be prowling about in the wood take the opportunity, while our friends were at a distance, to rush in and scalp them, and be off again before pursuit could me made. I have on many occasions found the importance of not despising an enemy. I urged Pipestick to keep a lookout while I was attending to the hurts of the old chief, and helping some of the poor women who were the most severely injured. I had been thus employed for some time, occasionally looking out to see how it fared with Obed and his party in their pursuit of the enemy. Wherever they went the Dacotahs scattered before them, but rallied again directly afterwards in the distance, and seemed as ready as ever to renew the attack. When I looked up the next time, they were once more flying as chaff before the wind. I at once saw that their purpose was to weary out their pursuers, and then to unite and to make a desperate attack on them altogether. I hoped that my friends would be too wary to be led into the snare laid for them. I had been for some time stooping down to try and bind up the lacerated wounds of a poor fellow who had been cruelly cut about by the Indians' tomahawks, when a shout from Pipestick made me lift my head, and I saw a dozen or more Dacotahs come scampering like demons out of the wood with the evident intention of making an attack on us. I sprang to my feet, and helped Pipestick to get up. We both of us had our rifles loaded, as had several of the Indians, from the ammunition furnished me by Obed. The cunning rogues did not know this, and thought that they were going to catch us unprepared. We presented

our rifles. They laughed derisively, as much as to say, "Oh, they will do us no harm, we know that." Never were they more mistaken in their lives, and it was the last mistake they ever made. We let them advance toward us without shrinking.

"John," said, "let me take the fellow on my right hand side; do you take the next, and tell our Indian friends to follow my lead. We'll astonish those redskins somewhat, I guess."

Pipestick did as I advised. We let the Indians approach within a hundred yards. On they came, making a desperate rush at us, and uttering their fearful war-whoops confident of victory.

"Now, my boys, give it to them," I shouted; "and take care that every shot tells."

Pipestick repeated my words. We all fired at the same moment, and six of the Indians were knocked over. So eager were the rest that they did not discover that their companions had fallen. They were still very formiable antagonists. We had not time to reload our rifles before they were upon us. Pipestick, in consequence of his wounds, was scarcely able to offer any effectual resistance, but the Indians fought bravely, and all the women who were unhurt came to our assistance. I certainly was very far from despising their assistance. They enabled me and Pipestick to fall a little back to load our rifles and those of our companions, and, taking a steady aim, we soon turned the fortunes of the day. Three more Indians were knocked over, and the rest turned tail, and ran off as fast as their long legs would carry them, to avoid the shots which we sent whizzing away in their rear. My great anxiety was now to get Obed to come back into the camp, fearing lest he and his party might be led by the manœuvres of the enemy to too great a distance from it, and that the Indians might get in between us and our friends, so I resolved to go myself.

There was no time for consideration; loading my rifle and seizing the tomahawk of one of the dead Indians, I sprang out

and ran faster than I thought I could possibly have moved. Just as I had got half way from the camp towards them, another party of Indians darted out of the wood and setting up their war-whoop ran out with terrible fleetness towards me. I ran faster, I believe, than I had ever before done, shouting out to Obed to come and rescue me. He at that time, unfortunately, was repelling a strong body of Indians, who seemed to press him very hard. I saw that I must depend on myself—I halted and kneeling down, took a steady aim at the headmost of my pursuers. He was, I thought, aware that his fate was sealed when he saw me pointing my rifle at him. He threw up his arms even before I had fired, and then over he fell, shot through the breast. I ran on as hard as I could pelt. There is no disgrace running from an overpowing enemy. Again and again I shouted at the top of my voice to Obed. The Dacotahs pushed on. I loaded as I ran. I thought if I could bring down another of them I might stop the progress of the rest. With no little difficulty I got my rifle ball rammed down. I turned suddenly and rather surprised my pursuers by lifting my weapon to my shoulder and letting fly at the leading Indian. He, as had his companion, tumbled over, but his death only the more exasperated the rest, and they sprang forward, more intent than ever to take my life. There was no time to load again. The fellows were gaining most uncomfortably on me. I began to feel very much as a person does in a dream, when he cannot get away from monsters in chase of him. "Obed, Obed, fire—do fire," I shouted. At length Obed heard me, and a dozen of his followers faced about and hurried to meet my enemies. The latter, seeing that their chance of cutting me off was gone, turned tail and endeavored to escape into the wood. I entreated my new friends not to pursue them, and they saw the wisdom of my advice. We accordingly went back to join the rest of the party, who had come to my relief. What was my surprise and pleasure to see three of my old friends, Obed's brothers among them. Just then the remnant of the Dacotahs once more took to flight, and allowed my friends leisure to ad-

dress me. They hurried up and heartily shook me by the hand, telling how glad they were to find that I was alive, while I assured them that I was equally rejoiced to find that they had escaped. We had no time, however, for talking. I urged them at once to assemble in the camp, so as to enable my friends to proceed on their journey, till they could stop at a more secure resting place. We got back to the camp just in time to scare away another party of Dacotahs, who like vultures had been hovering about ready to pounce down on their prey. Indeed we had enough to do to keep our scattered enemies at bay. We found old Waggum-winne-beg considerably recovered, and John Pipestick not much the worse for his wounds; indeed, it is extraordinary what knocking about an Indian will take without suffering materially, provided he keeps clear of the fire-water.

Some of the white men, when they found that I wished to proceed further east, till I had seen my friends in safety, grumbled very much, and said that they had come to help me, but had no notion of going through so much fatigue and danger for a set of varmint Indians. I told them in reply that I was very much obliged to them for all they had gone through on my account, but that I was bound by every law of God, and by every rule of right, to help those who had helped me; and that, come what might, I could not and would not desert them. The Raggets supported me, more especially Obed.

"Dick is right, boys," he exclaimed. "I would do the same as he proposes, and he would not be acting like himself if he did otherwise; the Ottoes have always been friends to the white man, and I've resolved to stick by Dick till we see them free from danger from these rascally Dacotahs."

These remarks soon won over by far the larger portion of the white men to our side, the Indians at once recognizing their duty to assist their friends. The Indians who had accompanied Obed were, I found, Kiowys, a large tribe inhabiting the country bordering on the Rocky mountains. I asked Obed how he had induced them to accompany him.

"Oh, it is a long story. I'll tell you about that and many other things when we have more time," he replied.

All hands now set to work to strike the tents and pack the wagons; it was soon done, and the wounded people stowed away in them on the top of their goods. Some of the men rather objected to having the poor wounded women placed in the wagons alongside of them, and seemed to think that, as long as the unfortunate wretches had life in them they might just as well get out and walk. Such are the chivalric notions of the Indian warriors we read so much about in novels, and our young ladies are taught to fancy such fine fellows. They have, notwithstanding, some few good qualities, but those belonging to the ancient code of chivalry are not among them.

We had not yet done with fighting, and we had not proceeded a mile before we caught sight of the Dacotahs hovering about us to the northward, watching for an opportunity to pounce down upon us. Although a good many of their warriors had been made to bite the dust, they still so far outnumbered our united parties that they might have some hopes, if they could take us by surprise, to cut us up altogeher. This, of course, we took care that they should not do. Our attention, however, was so much occupied that Obed had no time to give me an account of his adventures. Our great wish was that the Indians would come on again once more and allow us to give them a lesson which we hoped might teach them to keep at a respectful distance from us. We pushed on as fast as beasts and men could move, and just before nightfall we reached a hillock with several rocks jutting out of it, which was considered a remarkably secure place for camping. It was well fortified by nature, but the cunning backwoodsmen were not content to trust to it in that condition, but at once set to work to enable it to resist any attack which might possibly be made on it during the night.

Our old chief, to show his gratitude to his preservers, ordered an ample supply of provisions to be served out, and as soon as fires could be lighted and the food cooked we all sat

down to our repast. We at first were too hungry to talk, but I gleaned from one or two remarks made by my friends that their family had escaped from the Indians and were encamped for the winter at some distance to the eastward. There was plenty of dry underwood about, so we had made a blazing fire, round which we were seated. We had all lighted our pipes, and Obed was about to begin his narrative, when an Ottoe Indian came and said a few words to John Pipestick, who was sitting with us.

"Our chief, Waggum winne-beg, is anxious to see you," said he to me. "He feels very ill, and as he believes you to be a mighty medicine man, he thinks that you can certainly cure him."

I knew there was no use in denying my power, so I at once got up to go and see the old man, accompanied by John as interpreter. He was lying down on a mat, with his head resting on a block of wood which served him as a pillow. He sat up as I entered, and with unusual warmth expressed his pleasure at seeing me. I merely give the substance of what he said, for he addressed a long speech to me, which he believed would have a powerful effect on my feelings.

"Stranger," he began, "you have met with friends, and undoubtedly you contemplate leaving the tents of the redskins to accompany them whither they are going. Think well before you leave us. You shall be to us a son and a brother; we will adopt you; we will clothe you; we will paint you; you shall become like one of us in all things. I told you that I would give you one of my daughters. That was when I loved you a little. Now I love you much I will give you two. One does not surpass the other. Both are superior to any of their sex in my tribe, and I may venture to say in the world. I told you of Firefly's accomplishments; her sister, Glowworm, is equal to her. You shall have a large tent where they can dwell together in harmony, for among their other perfections their tongues are never addicted to wrangle. Take them, then, my friend; be my son, and be happy."

This pathetic appeal did not influence me as forcibly as Wag gum-winne-beg had hoped it might do. I did my best not to hurt his feelings, but I declined his offer. When he heard my decision he burst into tears.

"If it must be so," he said, at last, commanding himself, "so it must be."

Having thus delivered himself, he, like a well-bred gentleman, did not further press the delicate subject. After a further conversation on other subjects, I begged that he would excuse me as I wished to go back to my white friends who were waiting for me round their camp fire, and having once more carefully dressed the old man's wounds, I took my departure. It made Obed and his brother laugh heartily when I narrated to them the flattering offer I had received, and one or two of their companions, backwoodsmen of the roughest sort, seemed rather inclined to offer themselves in my stead, as candidates for the honor of possessing the brown ladies' hands.

"Now, Obed," said I, "I should like to hear all about your proceedings; but before you begin, I must ask you if you have placed sentries round the camp, and sent out scouts to discover if our foes are lurking near?"

He had, I found, placed a couple of sentries, one on each side of the camp, but had not thought it necessary to send out any scouts. I urged him to do so, and he selected three of the most intelligent of the Indians, and directed them to feel their way out on every side of the camp, and to ascertain whether any enemies were lurking near. These arrangements being made, I once more took my seat by the camp fire. I have always spoken of Obed as leader of the party. So in truth he was—his elder brothers having joined him after he had formed the expedition, and put themselves under his orders.

"Now, Obed, my dear fellow, do begin to tell me how it is that you came to my rescue so exactly at the nick of time," said I, lighting my pipe over the fire, and leaning back against a stone which served instead of an arm chair. I ought to have remarked that a screen had been put up, composed of birch

bark, to serve as a shelter against the wind, so that we were far warmer than might have been expected in that wintry night. Our encampment had a very picturesque appearance. The white men were collected round one fire; the Indians who had come with Obed had three or four among them, while the tents of Waggum-winne-beg and his followers were in the centre, with a fire burning in the middle of each of them. The greater number of the Indians had thrown themselves down to rest, wrapped up in their fur mantles, under the shelter of the rocks and their birch bark screens, with small fires at their feet. I could see in the distance the tall figures of those appointed to do duty as sentries walking up and down on their posts, while a few were still sitting up, bending over their fires, as they smoked their pipes and talked over the events of the day.

"Well, Dick, since you wish it, I'll begin," said Obed. "You remember the worthy Delaware who came to our tent and persuaded me to accompany him. He proved himself a trusty guide and companion. The rest and food he got with us restored his strength, and we set off at a good speed. We were very fortunate in killing several turkeys and prairie-hens, so we were able to husband our dried pemmican, at the same time that we fed sumptuously. Very often I thought about you when we were making good way, and I wished that you were with us. We were anxious, of course, to push on before the cold weather set in, for we knew that we should have difficulties enough to contend with. We had to be on our guard also against enemies of all sorts—redskin Dacotahs and Pawnees, grizzly bears, rattlesnakes and wolves; still my companion, from his long experience of their habits, was well able to take precautions against them. I, all the time, was anxiously looking out for traces of my family, but we had from the first got out of their track, and we met no one from whom we could make any inquiries. We always rose with the sun, and travelled on all day as long as our strength held out; but from weariness, or from the fear of not finding fit camping ground, we sometimes had to stop an hour or two before sunset. We

had done so on one occasion near a stream, whose steep banks sloped away down below us. While I lighted a fire, put up a wigwam, and prepared food, work to which the Delaware had an especial dislike, as it is always performed by women among the Indians, he, taking the rifle, went out along the banks of the stream to try to kill a wild turkey or two to supply the place of the one I was about to cook. He was making his way onward, pushing aside the boughs with the barrel of his weapon, when up started, not five yards from him, an old grey she-bear, accompanied by three or four half-grown cubs. He started back to be able to make use of his rifle, but before he could bring it to shoulder, the old bear sprang upon him, and with a blow of her paw knocked the rifle out of his hand. Had that blow struck his back, he would instantly have been killed, and I should have been left alone in the desert. I saw my friend's danger but could do nothing to help him, for if I fired I was as likely to injure him as the bear. As the brute was again about to strike, he drew his long knife, for fortunately his right arm was free, and began stabbing away at her neck. Notwithstanding this the fierce monster did not relax her gripe, while her claws went deeper and deeper into his flesh, and the horrid cubs, coming to their dam's assistance, began to assail his legs. I was hurrying on to the assistance of my companion, resolved to lose my own life rather than not do my utmost to save his, when the bank gave way, and bear and Indian both rolled away into the stream together."

Obed had got thus far in his narrative,—I have omitted some of the particulars he told me,—when the sharp crack of a rifle made us all start up, and seizing our weapons we hurried to that part of the camp whence it proceeded. Looking out into the darkness, we could see the figure of a man running at full speed towards us, across the white sheet of snow with which we were surrounded. We had no doubt that it was one of the scouts we had sent out; for who else was likely at that time to be coming to us?

"If it is not one of our scouts, it may be some white trapper

who has been caught by the Dacotahs, and has made his escape from them," observed John Pipestick, who had joined us. "They frequently come this far west, and those varmints are certain to have been on the look-out for them."

While we were waiting the arrival of the stranger, a piercing shriek broke the silence of night.

CHAPTER VII.

The Dacotahs are again upon us—We hurry to the rescue—We preserve the life of a stranger—Sam Short, the trapper—His adventures—Escape from the redskins—Desperate combat in the canoe—Sam's search for his companions—Discovers one in the hands of the Indians—They discover Sam, and he flies—Finds Blunt and together they go in search of Noggin—Again get sight of Noggin, but he is fastened to a stake—Noggin shows that in spite of his name he is a hero.

"THOSE vermin the Dacotahs are upon us again, and have taken the scalp of one of our scouts," cried Obed when he heard that piercing shriek. My experience of the previous night taught me too well also what it meant. Surrounded as we were by the rocks and the thick shrubs at the top of the mound, we were probably not perceptible from the ground below. Presently, as the stranger approached us, we saw emerging from the darkness a dozen or more figures, following one after the other slowly and stealthily, evidently fancying that they were not perceived. We had no doubt that they were a party of our late opponents the Dacotahs, but what was their purpose it was difficult to say; they must have known that we had heard the death-shriek of the murdered man, and they could not but have supposed that we should have been on the watch for them. Perhaps this only precipitated a previously formed plan. The stranger approached us rapidly, we could hear aimed at him more than one shaft as it flew hissing through the air. Several axes also were thrown in savage fury, as the Indians saw that their hoped-for victim was about to escape them. The stranger came rushing on, he had good need of speed.

"Obed, my boy," said I, "let us sally out and protect that poor fellow. If we do not, the redskins will be up to him before he reaches this hill!"

Obed was not a man it was necessary to ask twice to do a thing of the sort, nor were his brothers or their followers. The order was sent rapidly round to assemble together; not a word was uttered above a whisper—the sentries were left standing at their posts as if unconscious of what was going on in the plain below. But a few seconds were expended in the preparation.

"Now, my boys, down upon them!" exclaimed Obed, and at the word we sprang over our entrenchments as quick as lightning, we were up to the stranger, who for a moment was somewhat startled at our sudden appearance, but soon, comprehending the state of affairs, took shelter behind us while we sprang on to meet the Indians. We halted within ten yards of them, and poured in a volley from our rifles which brought nearly one half of them to the ground.

The remainder hesitated an instant, and then upon hearing our loud shouts and huzzas, and seeing us come on with our axes gleaming in our hands, they turned tail and scampered off as fast as they could go. To pursue them would have been dangerous with so large a number of their tribe in the neighborhood, and it was very probable that they had an ambush near at hand ready to cut us off. The sound of our fire-arms brought up two of our scouts, who joined us as we were returning to our camp, but the third did not make his appearance, and we had too much reason to fear that he had fallen a victim to the Dacotahs. By the time we got back to camp we found Waggum-winne-beg and all his people, both men and women, turned out and ready to resist any attack that might be made on us. We waited under arms for some time, and then finding that the enemy did not seem inclined to approach, we posted out sentries, with directions to keep a strict look out, and to give notice directly if they perceived any suspicious movements below, and then we once more sat down round our fire. Our number was increased by the stranger of whom we had not till then had time to take any notice beyond observing that he was a white man, and that he was dressed in the usual rough cos

tume of a trapper. We now perceived, as he sat close up to the fire with the palm of his hands spread out before it, that he looked famished and weary.

"Friend, thou art hungry," said Obed, placing before him some dried deer's flesh and biscuit, and filling him up a cup of spirits and water. "Eat that while we cook you a more savory mess."

"Thank you," said the stranger, "you have discovered my chief want." He showed that he spoke the truth by setting to work silently and heartily on the food like a man who had fasted long, and was in no way fastidious as to the nature of his provender, so that it was fit to support life. I have often felt ashamed of my civilized and refined friends as well as of myself, when I have watched the abstemious habits of those inhabitants of the backwoods. However varied, or however delicate, or highly flavored the food placed before them, I have seen them over and over again sit down and help themselves to the nearest dish, eat as much as they required, and generally a very moderate quantity, and then perhaps, after taking a glass of cold water, get up and leave the table. We waited till the stranger had somewhat recovered his strength before asking him any questions. At last he stopped eating, gave his hunting knife a turn or two over his legging, replaced it in its sheath, and looking up said:

"Well, friends, you have saved my life; I've to thank you for that, not that I know that it is worth much; and now I guess you'd like to know where I come from, and what I've been about."

We all told him that we should particularly like to hear something about him.

"Then I'll tell," he replied. "My name is Sam Short, I'm a free trapper; I've hunted this country, man and boy, for pretty well fifty years, and that's a good slice in a man's life. It was at the end of last fall that I and two companions started westward to trap beavers and shoot bears, or any other game which came our way. We'd left our horses and taken to a canoe to

paddle up the Kansas river. Both my companions, Tom Noggin and Silas Blount, were staunch fellows. It doesn't do to have a man in our way of life one can't depend on. We had passed several beaver dams, which we settled to visit on our return, and as long as the season would allow to push higher up the stream. There's no pleasanter life than that we led. We landed when we felt inclined to stretch our legs and take a shot at a deer or bear. We killed more deer than we could eat, so we only kept the tenderest parts; but the skins were of no little value. One night we landed at an open spot, with plenty of thick trees though growing round, intending to camp there. We had lighted a small fire, and we took care that the wood was dry, so that it should send up no smoke to show our whereabouts to any lurking redskins. Silas and Noggin took their guns, and said they would go and have a look for a deer, or a bear, or a turkey, while I sat over the fire and cooked the venison. I cut some right good steaks, and had dressed them to a turn, and was thinking that it was time my companions were back, when I heard Blount's voice sing out merrily as he came through the wood towards me. We had no fear of Indians, for we had met with no traces of them as we came up the river, and the first thing we had done that day on landing was to look about for them in every direction. Blount sat himself down by my side and showed me a fat turkey he had just killed, when we heard a shot at some distance from us. We waited some time, thinking Noggin would be coming back; but, as he did not make his appearance, I asked Blount to climb a tree and see if he could make him out anywhere. Curiously enough, he slung his rifle on his back, he had already his shot belt and powder horn about him, and up a high tree, a little way off, he went. Scarcely had he got to the top, when I heard him cry out, 'Fly, man, fly; the redskins are on us!' I did not want a second warning. Seizing my rifle, I sprang to the river side, and as I did so, a band of Indians burst through the woods brandishing their tomahawks, and uttering their ous war-cries. I threw myself into the canoe, and with a

kick of my foot shoved it off from the bank towards the middle of the stream. I looked for the paddles; there was only one in the canoe; I seized it, and began to paddle away down the stream with all my might. The Indians followed me some way, and seeing that I had but one paddle, and made but slow progress, three of them, running on ahead, plunged into the stream, for the evident purpose of cutting me off. I watched them as they approached. If either of them should succeed in getting hold of the canoe, I knew that my life would be lost. Fortunately they had separated somewhat, and were some fathoms distant from each other down the stream. I saw that my only chance was to destroy them in detail. I dropped my paddle and seized my rifle. It was of course loaded. I had no time to lose, for I had to fire and to load again to be ready for another enemy. I took a steady aim. The savage leaped out of the water, casting a look at me of the most intense hatred, and then down he went like a shot, leaving a red streak on the water to mark the spot. I loaded rapidly; the next fellow darted on, hoping to catch hold of the canoe before I was ready to fire; but I was too quick for him. When he saw this, he dived, thinking to escape my bullet. I was surprised at the length of time he kept under water. I thought that he would never come up again. I dared not exchange my rifle for my paddle, or I would have got over further to the opposite bank. All my attention was fixed on the spot where I knew that his head would appear. The instant I caught sight of his savage countenance grinning up at me, my bullet entered his brain, and he sank like his comrade. I had not time to finish loading before the third fellow, by desperate exertion, had got hold of the bow of the canoe with one of his hands, while with the other he attempted to seize my right arm, which was employed in ramming down the bullet into my rifle. He had his knife in his teeth, and I saw that the moment he had grasped my arm, he would seize it with his other hand, and plunge it into my side. My great fear was that he would upset the canoe, so that I had to lean back on the opposite side to prevent him

from so doing. There is no more cunning or treacherous a varmint than a true bred redskin. When he found that I saw what he was at, he pretended to fall backwards, and as I stretched over to unloosen his hand from the gunwale of the canoe, he sprang up by a sudden stroke of his feet, and clutched me by the throat. So tight did he press my wind-pipe, that I felt that I had but a slight chance of escaping with my life; still, I had lived too long a hunter's life to think of giving in while a hope of escape existed. I caught hold of the side of the canoe with one hand, and with the other, letting go my rifle, I felt about for my knife, which, with my powder flask and other things, I had thrown into the bottom of the canoe. If I could find it, I had little fear that I should know how to use it. The Indian guessed what I was about, and pressed my throat tighter and tighter, till I felt myself growing black in the face. He saw his advantage; the time was come, he thought, to gain the victory. Letting go his hold of the canoe, he seized his knife with his right hand, and attempted to haul himself on board by means of my throat. His naked knee was on the gunwale, when at the same moment my fingers discovered my knife. I clutched the handle. My enemy's knee slipped off the smooth wood—his weapon missed its aim, scarcely grazing my side, and I plunged mine up to the hilt in his breast. His hand relaxed its hold of my throat, and he dropped back lifeless into the stream.

"I cannot describe my sensations; there was no time to think about them, at all events. I finished ramming down the bullet into my rifle, and while the rest of the Indians were hesitating whether to follow me or not, I pointed it at them, to show them what the first who might venture into the stream would have to expect. They watch me for some time, uttering howls of the most intense rage and hatred; and then, seeing that I was a good match for them, they turned back up the stream again to wreak their vengeance, as I feared, on my companions. I pretended to be paddling down the stream, till I was certain they were out of sight, but I was not going to desert my friends in

that way; such is not the backwoodsman's law. When I knew that they were well ahead, I ceased descending the stream, and, pulling to the south bank, I made fast my canoe to some bushes, and waited till dark. I thought about all that had occurred; Blount, I hoped, might possibly have escaped, but I greatly feared that Noggin would have fallen into the power of our enemies. Waiting till I could not be seen from the north shore, keeping on the opposite side, I paddled cautiously and slowly up the stream. I kept as much as possible in the eddies and little bays, and thus avoided the strength of the current, against which I could not otherwise have pulled. The nearer I got to the spot where I had left my companions, the more cautiously I proceeded; I knew that if the Indians had not killed them at once, they would not destroy them for three or four days, but would keep them alive to torture them, and to exhibit them to their old men and squaws at home. It was very necessary to be cautious how I proceeded; the slightest carelessness would betray me to the cunning varmints, and I should not only risk my own life, but be unable to help my friends. At last, about two hours after dark, I got directly opposite the spot where we had encamped; I watched, but could see no light to indicate that the redskins were there; so I pulled up a little further, and then in perfect silence paddled across. Unless the redskins had been on the look out for me, I did not think there was much chance of my being seen. I did not venture to let the bow of the canoe touch the bank, lest even the slight noise I would make against the grass should be heard, but allowed it to drop slowly down with the current, I peered eagerly into every opening of the forest which presented itself. I began to fear that the Indians had gone away and carried off Blount and Noggin with them, when my eyes caught the glimmer of a light a considerable distance off among the bushes. I had little doubt that the light proceeded from the camp-fire of my enemies; I resolved to ascertain whether this was so, and whether my friends were in their power. I carefully pushed my canoe alongside the bank, and

securing it to a bush, stepped out with my hunting-knife in my belt, and my rifle in my hand. I know as well as a native-born Indian how to move silently through the woods, not allowing my feet to tread on a dry stick, or my shoulders to touch a rotten branch. Step by step, feeling my way with the greatest care, I approached the spot where I had seen the fire; at last I got close to the boundary of an open glade, and by looking through the bushes, I saw at the further end of it some dozen or more Indians, decked in their war paint and feathers, squatted round a fire. One was, I saw, speaking, while the others were listening to him with the deepest attention, I looked around, but could distinguish nothing beyond the immediate circle of the fire. At length the orator ceased, and one of the band threw a small quantity of fresh fuel on to the fire. This made it blaze up; and the glare from the bright flame extending to some distance, it fell upon the stump of a tree to which was bound a human figure. I watched to try and make out who it was, for the light was not at first sufficient to enable me to distinguish objects at a distance. I had long to wait. I should have to guide my movements according to which of my friends was in captivity. If it should prove to be Noggin, I might hope that Blount had escaped their vigilance; but if he himself was the prisoner, I should have to fear that Noggin had already fallen a victim to their ferocity. I had long to wait. One warrior after another got up, and made a vociferous speech, till at last one of them threw a large handful of sticks into the fire. At the same moment it was fanned by a fresh blast of wind which rustled through the forest, and flames darting upwards for a few moments, by their light I recognized the features of Noggin. His eyes were fixed on the group of warriors, as if he was trying to make out what they were saying. There was an expression of horror and despair on his countenance, for he knew full well that a death of torture was prepared for him. I observed, however, that his lips were firmly pressed together, as if he had made up his mind not to flinch, however much he might be called to suffer while

life might last. I looked round for Blount; he was nowhere to be seen; and as I could not discern any bloody scalp hung up on a pole as a trophy of their prowess, I began to hope that he might have escaped the vigilance of our enemies, and that I might still fall in with him. My great desire was, in the first place, to rescue Noggin; but how to do so was the question. Succor might almost seem hopeless. Even should Blount be alive and at large, he and I together could scarcely hope to succeed. I counted our enemies; there were twenty altogether. Three of these, from their costume and the way they talked, I judged to be chiefs or principal men. Three more, one of whom certainly was a chief, I had sent to their long home. As I could do no more good by staying in so dangerous a neighborhood, I waited till another long speech was begun, and then crept back as carefully as I had approached, towards my canoe. I reached it in safety, and pushing off I crossed to the opposite side of the stream.

"I hunted about till I discovered a point with bushes growing thickly on it. Here I landed; and hauling up my canoe, hoped that I might remain concealed, should the redskins again come down to the side of the river to look for me. After I had done this, so fatigued was I that, no sooner did I lie down by the side of my canoe, than I fell fast asleep. It was daylight when I awoke. I sprung to my feet, rifle in hand, and peered through the bushes which effectually concealed me. I could distinguish in the distance the Indians, who had likewise just risen, and appeared to be in a state of no little excitement. They had discovered my trail, and were hunting about to ascertain in which direction I had gone 'Ah, ah!' I thought, 'I have crossed an element which allows no trail to be left on it. They will scarcely believe that I am still so near them; or should they even suspect it, they will not attempt to follow me, for they know the effects of my rifle, and that if they do three or four of their number will probably have to pay the penalty of their lives.'

"On Noggin's account I did not want to exasperate them

more than they were already, or I might have picked two or three of them off, when, having discovered my trail they followed it to the banks of the river. I saw them peering in every direction, now down the stream, now up it; but, clever as they were, they could not guess which way I had gone. They examined the bushes all round, but they told no tale which they could read. They were evidently not a little astonished at my audacity in having ventured so close to them as to watch their movements. It made them look upon me as a mighty brave, and they would, I doubted not, have tried their most exquisite tortures on me to prove my heroism had they been able to catch me. I knew that there was a possibility of their so doing, for I was resolved not to leave my friends to their fate without trying to rescue them, great as I knew the risk was that I was running. When they could not, with all their ingenuity, discover what had become of me, they stamped on the ground, and dashed their hatchets into it, and gnashed their teeth, and performed many other frantic gestures. I was pleased at this, because it showed that they had abandoned their search after me. Once more they came to the edge of the water, and spit, and grinned at it to show their rage at its having disapointed them of their prey, and then they turned tail and went off back to their camp. I feared poor Noggin would be the sufferer, but I could not help that. I waited hidden away for three or four hours, till I thought that they would to a certainty have taken their departure, before I even stirred from my place of concealment. I knew the tricks they were up to, and that very likely they would have remained in ambush in the hope of my coming back to look after my friends. If they had killed Blount, then I felt sure they would not have stopped, but if they had found out that there were three of us, and he was still at large, then I considered it probable that they would be endeavoring to catch us, and that the very greatest caution would be necessary in my proceedings. Still I could not delay till night to commence my progress, which would have been the safest plan; for, in the first place, the In-

dians, if they had moved, would have got too much the start of me, and I was already so hungry that I was ready to run any risk to procure food to appease my appetite. At last I could wait no longer. I slipped into my canoe, and emerging from my hiding place, went across the scream as fast as my one paddle could urge me. When I was about half way over, I saw something moving among the bushes. I stopped paddling and seized my rifle. It might be an Indian, or it might be a bear, or a stag. I was ready for either. Just as I brought my rifle to my shoulder I heard a voice sing out, 'Hillo, Short! don't fire, old feller.' I knew at once that it was Blount who spoke, and right glad I was to hear him. Down went my rifle and I paddled away, you may be sure, as hard as I could till I reached the shore where he, as big as life stood, ready to receive me. We shook hands warmly, and then he told me he had been up the tree all the time; that he had watched the Indians pursuing me along the banks of the river, but could not tell whether or not they had killed me, though he saw them return with diminished numbers and guessed at all events I had not died without a desperate fight. When they came back they hunted about all round our camp, carried off or destroyed all our property, and at last retired further into the wood to join their comrades. All the night he had spent in a state of uncertainty about me, and it was not till the following morning, when he saw the Indians come down to the river, and watched their movements, that he guessed I was alive and had paid them a visit. He saw them go away, and he then descended the tree, and like a cat in pursuit of a bird, crept after them. To his great satisfaction he saw them breaking up their camp, and then they journeyed off towards the north-west. Still he followed them till assured that they really were going in that direction. When he had done this he turned back and looked out for me. We agreed at once that we would set off and try to rescue Noggin as soon as we had killed sufficient game to satisfy our hunger. We calculated that the Indians were quite far enough off by this time not to hear the report of our rifles.

Hunger, when not too long endured, sharpens men's wits. We soon killed a couple of wild turkeys and a deer, which we fell in with in great numbers on their way south. We hid away our canoe in the bank of the river, and so covered it with branches that even an Indian's sharp eyes were not likely to discover it. Having lighted a fire, we smoked, in a hurried way, as much food as would last us for several days, and then, taking a good meal of toasted venison, we set off on our perilous adventure.

"We soon found our way up to the Indian camp, and we observed that they took no pains to hide their trail, by which we judged that they did not suppose that any of their enemies were in the neighborhood. There were no women or children, which showed us that they had been on a hunting or war expedition, and also that their chief camp was at no great distance. This gave us the greatest concern, because if once they reached it we could scarcely hope to rescue Noggin from their power. We calculated that there were twenty warriors altogether. They were on foot. They were dragging Noggin on, but he evidently delayed them as much as possible. Perhaps, poor fellow, he suspected that Blount and I were following him. We travelled faster than they did and towards the evening of the fifth day of our journey we saw from the freshness of the trail, that we were not far from them. We examined our rifles to be ready for an emergency; but we knew that we could do nothing to help our friend before night. We supposed that we were about half a mile or so from our enemies, and not deeming it wiser to get much nearer, we continued to follow at the same pace at which they were going. At last we came to more open ground, and several times we caught sight of them. We were near enough indeed to count their numbers, and we found that we had made an exact estimate of them. Evening at last came, and we knew that they were encamped. It was now therefore necessary to be more careful than ever, for some of the warriors might be prowling about, and should they discover us, even though we might escape

them or come off victorious, we should have to abandon all hopes of saving Noggin. We accordingly lay down in some thick cover where no one was likely to find us, and waited till they were likely to have gone to sleep for the night. We talked over all sorts of plans. Blount proposed going boldly into the camp himself dressed as a medicine man; but then the difficulty was to find the wherewithal to fit himself out. I, too, opposed the scheme; for they would naturally be suspicious, and, come from whatever quarter he might, they would be apt to question him very narrowly before letting him range their camp at liberty.

"'Well, Short, it is all very well for you to say this plan won't do, or that won't do, but do you just tell me what will do.'

"This was a poser; I could not. We had our deer-skin coats. They had been saved in the canoe. He proposed cutting his into strips, and with the aid of a red pocket-handkerchief he judged that he could turn himself into a very good white medicine man. I at last consented to let him try the scheme, provided no opportunity occured during the night of helping poor Noggin. When the plan was arranged, we crept nearer and nearer to the savages. They had camped in an open part of a green valley, the sides of which were clothes with trees. They were far enough from any trees not to be taken by surprise from any enemies except those armed with rifles. We climbed one of the trees whence we could look down on them and watch their proceedings. We might indeed have picked several of them off had revenge alone been our object; but that would have done no good to poor Noggin, unless he could have managed to escape in the confusion. Hour after hour passed away. The savages sat up talking over their fire Several of them at last lay down, but a party went out to examine the neighborhood of the camp, and when they returned four of those who had previously gone to sleep got up and sat watching their prisoner, evidently with malignant pleasure. This vigilance of the enemy made us almost despair of being

able to deliver our friend. Whenever we turned our eyes in the direction of the camp, there were the four wretches gazing up into the countenance of their victim, and he, poor fellow, already looked more dead than alive. Thus we lay stretched out at our length watching them hour after hour. No one moved. Our hearts sank within us. After about four hours the guards gave some loud grunts, and some of their companions starting up took their places. They seemed to watch the countenance of their victim with intense gratification. If, in spite of the bodily pain and mental suffering he was enduring, he dropped asleep, one of them would throw a burning brand at him, to rouse him up again to a full consciousness of his position. It was with the greatest difficulty that I could refrain from knocking over one of the scoundrels, when I saw them treating the poor fellow in that way. Daylight was now approaching; with heavy hearts we had to withdraw for fear of being discovered when the Indians should break up their camp in the morning. We feared, too, that we should not have another opportunity, for we judged that the Indians were close upon their village from the way in which they had feasted, leaving scarcely any food for the next day. A hunter is obliged to observe everything, and to make what he observes speak a plain language to him. We crept away from the camp to our former hiding-place, and then, overcome with fatigue, we both fell asleep. We were protected during those hours of helplessness by a power greater than man's.

"When we awoke the sun was already high in the heavens; we ate our frugal meal, and then set forward to overtake the Indians. They had started early and had got much ahead of us. We pushed on but still did not overtake them. We had been traveling some eight or nine hours, when, being on the top of some rising ground, we saw in the distance several curling wreaths of smoke rising up amid the forest. We guessed that without doubt they proceeded from the village of our enemies. Our chief chance of rescuing Noggin was gone. To get him out from among a village full of men, women, and

children, all thirsting for his blood, was next to impossible. Still Blount said he would try it. We crept carefully up in the track of the redskins, stopping at every spot from which we could have a clear look ahead, and occasionally climbing trees whence we might hope to get a sight of the village. This was in one respect a dangerous proceeding, for should the Indians cross our trail, they would very likely discover us, although we took care to obliterate as far as we were able, all marks of our progress. In this way we went on till Blount and I having got to the top of a thick branched and wide-spreading fir, we saw, scarcely the eighth of a mile off, the conical-shaped wigwams of our enemies. Loud shouts and shrieks reached our ears; the old men, women, and children had gone out to welcome their warriors and their unfortunate captive. We could see him in the middle of them, and the women and children rushing up and hissing at him, and abusing him, and pinching him, and spitting at him, treating him indeed with every indignity. He stood quiet, as far as we could see, without flinching. At last he was led on and secured to a tree, close to one of the principal lodges. There the savages let him remain while they retired to their homes, and the women set to work to prepare them a feast. We now judged it time to get further off to take some rest which we so much needed. We knew that the savages were not likely to put him to death that night, probably not till the following evening. We chewed some dried venison, and then fell asleep. It was pitchy dark when we awoke, but the noise from among the Indian lodges was louder than ever. Once more we approached the spot, fires were burning brightly in the center of the village, and the savages were dancing round them, leaping, and shrieking, and howling in the most terrific manner. A stake had been run into the ground, and poor Nog gin, stripped to the waist, was tied to it. His face turned towards us, despair sat upon it, it was already as pale as death, indeed he did not look as if he had many minutes to live. The cruel savages thought so likewise, and afraid of losing their victim, they had resolved at once, it appeared, to commence

that series of tortures which would terminate with his death. With horrid cries the women approached him, and ran into his flesh the burning ends of sticks, which they flourished in their hands, and they halloed and shouted in his ears, to rouse him up to feel the more acutely his sufferings. Talk of the noble qualities of savages, I've seen a good deal of human nature, and to my mind, left to itself, without anything to improve or correct it, there is nothing too bad or abominably cruel which it will not do."

"There, I have told you enough of the old fellow's story for the present," exclaimed Dick Onslow, throwing himself back in his chair and stretching out his legs, "I know that I am very thankful that I had not to share poor Noggin's fate."

"You are a pretty fellow for a story teller," cried one of his hearers (I believe it was I, his humble amanuensis, Barrington Beaver). "You leave the honest Delaware in the clutches of the bear; you leave yourself surrounded by a band of fierce Dacotahs thirsting for your blood; and poor Noggin even in a worse predicament; indeed, I would not wish to be in the skins of either Short or Blount; and now you suddenly stop short, and leave us all lost in a labyrinth of doubt as to how they got out of their various dilemmas.

"Not a word more just now, not a word more," answered Dick, laughing. "You will all do your best to keep me alive, and I promise you I will go on with my tale another day."

CHAPTER VIII.

Obed's story continued—Noggin rescued by the chief's daughter—Sam and Blount retire, hoping that he may be happy—They continue their wanderings—Blount's death—Sam proceeds alone—Captured by the redskins—They prepare to kill him—Not liking it, he endeavors to escape from it—Escape and pursuit—A ride for life—Hard pressed for food—Obed's adventures—How he escaped from the bear—The faithful Delaware.

SO you all want to know what became of poor Noggin," said Dick, leaning back in his comfortable arm-chair, after he had taken a sip from his claret glass, and stretching out his legs on the thick buffalo skin which served as a rug to his cosy diniug room fire place. "I'll continue the narrative as old Short told it to me, though not exactly in his own words, for those I cannot pretend to repeat, I cannot even hope to imitate his quaint expressions and racy humor. Noggin stood the attacks of his tormentors with as much heroism as could the most stoical of red warriors. We longed to rush in to his rescue, but we knew full well that the attempt would be worse than useless, and we should inevitably lose our own lives and not save his. The fires burnt up brightly, shedding a lurid glare over the whole scene, making the red-painted and feather-bedizened warriors, and their hideous brown squaws, look more horrible and terrific than ever, as they danced, and leaped, and grinned, and shrieked round our friend. To make the picture perfect, you must remember the dark forest in the background, the tents covered with red-tanned skins, and the groups of children and dogs scuttling about in front of them, with the stakes, and the lean to's, and sheds of different sorts, on or in which the spoils of the chase and other provisions were hung up to smoke. Indians delight in prolonging the sufferings of their captives; so they, in their refined cruelty, took care not to

wound the poor fellow in any vital part. After a short time the old squaws resharpened the points of their fire-sticks, and then they all advanced together, the warriors brandishing their tomahawks and shrieking louder than ever. Noggin eyed them all, however, with perfect coolness and disdain. I thought that his last moment had come. This conduct, though the savages admired it, only made them the more anxious to conquer his spirit. Several produced their instruments of torture to tear his flesh, and to pull out his eyes and his tongue, indeed I will not describe all the excruciating cruelties they were prepared to inflict; I well nigh gave way myself with horror, though my nerves are pretty well strung, when a young squaw, who had been sitting in the shadow of one of the tents, sprung up, and darting between the warriors and old women, before any of them could stop her, threw one of her arms round Noggin's neck, and holding out her other hand, in a tone of authority ordered her savage countrymen and women to keep back, and claimed him as her husband. She was a fine, tall young woman, and though her skin was dark, her features were handsome and full of animation, while her eye sparkled with the spirit that burned in her bosom. 'Come, loose him, loose,' she cried, and we could understand her language. 'He is mine. Let none of you dare to hurt a hair of his head.' I had heard of such things being done before, but I did not much believe in them. It convinced me that women have a tender, compassionate, loving heart in every country, and that man should prize it as one of the richest gifts which bounteous Nature has bestowed on him, and consider it one of the most cowardly of acts and foulest of crimes to tamper with or betray it. The young girl was a chief's daughter. Her people, as they were bound to do, obeyed her immediately. Noggin was released, and led by her to her tent. Instead of the torments he had been suffering, he found himself tended with the gentlest care which affection could dictate. Blount and I seeing this, made signs to each other that it was time for us to be off. In the morning the redskins would be prowling about, and they would

be too glad to get us instead of the victim who had escaped them. We were not likely to find another Poccahontas to save our lives. We went back the way we had come, obliterating as best we could all traces of our advance, and at last, after many hardships, we reached our canoe. We had our rifles, but our ammution was growing short, and we had no means of replenishing it, the winter also was coming on, and we were far from any white settlement. Still hunters are not to be frightened by trifles; we knew well not only how to trap beavers, but anything that flies, creeps or swims, and we agreed that we would lay up a store of provisions, and spend the winter by the side of the river. To think with a hunter is to act. Our great want was salt. We caught soon a supply of fish, fowl, and deer, and we killed a bear, which made very good beef; but all these things we had to dry in the sun or to smoke; we kept our ammunition in case of any extremity in which we might find ourselves. We should have liked to have communicated with Noggin, but we knew that he, like many white men who had married Indian women, would be reconciled to his lot, and from henceforth live the life of Indians. We agreed, therefore, as soon as the return of spring enabled us to travel, we would take up our beaver skins and furs left in *cache* and go back with them to the settlements. Had we been supplied with powder, we should not have hesitated at once to commence our journey, but unarmed, as we soon should be, we should have been both unable to supply ourselves with food, or to defend ourselves against any enemies we might meet; whereas in the spring we should descend rapidly in our canoe, and carry our provisions with us.

"Several weeks passed away. We had a warm hut built and a good supply of provisions and fuel collected. It was intensely cold, the river was frozen across, and the snow had set in. My great concern was for my companion. Illness had attacked him; he grew weaker and weaker every day. With a sorrowful heart I saw that he had not long to live. I told him so at last. He would not believe me. He said that he should

get better, that the cough would soon leave him, and that he was stronger than he had been. He almost persuaded me that I was wrong in my surmises and that he should recover. When the cold grew very great he took to his bed, from which according to my idea, I though he would never rise. At last one day, however, he sat up and said he should like to go out and see if he could not kill a wild turkey; he should like to have some fresh meat. I told him I would get it for him; he said no, half the pleasure would be in killing it himself; he felt as strong as a buffalo, and he knew he could walk a dozen miles. So he got up and put on his thick coat, and took down his rifle from the peg to which it hung, and said he was ready. I looked at him with wonder. His cheeks were so wan and his hands so thin I did not think he could have held his rifle. 'If you will go, I will go with you, Blount,' said I, and took down my rifle to follow him.

"I had just got to the door of our hut, when I heard him say—'Ah! there is the turkey cock.' So, sure enough, there was one sitting on the bough of a tree not fifty yards from us. As he spoke the crack of his rifle sounded in my ears—down came the bird. It seemed as if he was going to run to pick it up; but he staggered forward a few paces, and before I could get up to him he had fallen flat on his face. The blood gushed from his mouth. I lifted him from the ground; he pressed my hand, and before I got him back to our hut he was dead. I sat down and did what I had not done for many a long year before—I burst into tears. He had been my companion and friend, faithful and true, almost from his youth upward—son, wife, everything to me—and now he was gone, and I was alone in the great wide melancholy wilderness. After a time I became quite foolish—I spoke to him, I called out his name, I entreated him to answer me. I felt at last that I should go mad if I kept him longer near me, so I roused myself and dragged his body to a distance under an old hickory tree. The ground was to hard to let me dig a grave, so I made a hole in the snow, and collected all the stones I could find near the river, and

piled them over him; I never went near the spot again. The next three or four weeks were the most miserable I ever passed in my life. Not that I had any great reason to be anxious about myself. I had an abundance of food, and I knew that I could easily find my way to the settlements in the spring; but it was the long, long solitude which I dreaded."

"I can enter into your feelings," said I, interrupting him, and I told him what I had suffered, and on comparing notes we found that we had been within a hundred miles of each other. "However, go on," said I, and Sam Short continued his narrative.

"Three or four weeks had passed away after the death of Blount, when one day, as I was standing near my hut wishing for the return of spring, for I had very little to occupy my hands or thoughts, I saw a half a dozen redskins approaching me at a rapid rate. To attempt to fly was useless, and I knew that I could not hope to defend myself successfully; so, though I did not like their looks, I saw that my only chance of safety was to meet them in a friendly manner. Accordingly I advanced towards them. As I got nearer I saw that they were Pawnees, some of the very tribe among whom Noggin was located, and three of whose people I had lately killed, I may add also the greatest thieves in this part of the country. Still I put the best face I could on the matter, and held out my hand as a token of friendship. Instead of taking it, two of them seized me by the shoulders and hurried me back to my hut. As soon as they entered they began to make free with everything they saw, and it was very evident that they had come to rob me of all they could get. When their eyes fell on poor Blount's rifle, they asked me what had become of my companion. I made signs to them that he was dead. They examined the hut for a few minutes, and then seemed satisfied that I told them the truth. On finding that I had a good store of provisions they made signs to me to light a fire, and then forced me to cook enough provisions to satisfy their not very moderate appetites. I knew that it was better to comply with their demands

than to refuse, and the less spirit I showed the less likely they were to keep a strict watch over me. If they considered that I was a brave fellow they would look upon me as a greater prize, and treat me accordingly.

"After they had eaten as much as they could, they went hunting about the spot in all directions till they came to the place where my canoe was hidden. No sooner did they see it than there was a great consultation among them, and they came back and sat round my fire and talked away for an hour or more. The result of this conference was anything but favorable to me. They had undoubtedly heard of the death of their countrymen, and knowing the locality, and seeing the canoe, they had come to the conclusion that the deed had been done by my hand or by that of my late companion. This, doubtless saved my life for the present. If I had killed their friends, they wished to preserve me to put me to death with the most refined of their tortures. That night they slept in my hut. The next morning, having pulled my canoe to pieces, and totally destroyed my hut, they set forth on what I guessed from their preparations to be a long journey. I will not describe that journey. At night we slept within any thick wood or cypress swamp we could find, and travelled on the greater part of the day. My captors exhibited a wonderful power of endurance. I walked of course with lagging steps, for I felt sure that if I could not find means of escape, I should be put to death at the end of it. At last we fell in with the main body of the tribe. No sooner was I shown to them, than several of them declared that I was the very man who had killed their companions, and my heart sunk within me; I knew that they would to a certainty put me to death if they could. The chiefs forthwith held a consultation with all ceremony, and speedily decided my fate. I was led into a large wigwam to pass the night, and guarded by my captors. I watched all night for an opportunity to escape, but my arms and legs were secured by leathern thongs which cut almost into my flesh, and I had no power to release myself. My heart, as well it might, sunk

lower and lower. Day came; I made up my mind that it was to be my last on earth. I thought of Noggin, and I knew that if he could he would rescue me, but at the same time I was aware that the cunning redskins would not let him know that I had been captured. The day wore on, the tribe collected from far and near, the fires were lighted, the squaws and children assembled; indeed the same scene was enacted which I had seen gone through with Noggin. The fire was actually scorching my feet, and the smoke was ascending into my nostrils, when the sky became dark and a terrific snow-storm commenced. Down it came like a sheet upon the earth and speedily put out the fires. The redskins rushed into their wigwams. I was dragged back into the one where I had passed the night, and was told that my death was postponed until the next day. I resolved to make use of the time of grace; still my prospect of escape was slight indeed. A stout thong of buffalo hide was fastened round my neck, and secured to one of the beams which ran across the top of the wigwam, thongs fastened my wrists and ankles, and cut deeply into my flesh, and my guards squatted closely around, seeming inclined never to take their eyes off me. Every now and then they addressed me and told me for my comfort that I should eat fire in the morning; I wished that they would go to sleep, and, at all events, leave me in peace. At last four of them lay down, and I knew by their snoring that they were really unconscious of the present. Two of them still sat up and kept talking at me, describing the horrors I was to go through. At length one of them lay down, and now only one old savago remained awake; I thought he would never cease talking and smoking and tormenting me. On he talked; never have I seen a more hideous or vicious old fellow. I tried in vain not to listen. However, at last his voice grew thick, and more and more indistinct; his pipe went out and his head dropped on his breast. Not a moment was to be lost; I tugged and tugged at the thongs which bound my wrists. My heart beat so quick and loud that I thought the sound would awaken my captors. My struggles freed my

wrists, and soon I had my ankles free, but the tough, well-seasoned buffalo-hide rope round my neck resisted all my efforts to loosen it. Daylight was approaching. The noise I made or my loud breathing roused up the old man. I thought all was lost. Placing my hands behind me, I pretended to be dozing. He got up, stirred the fire, and then sat down again. Oh, how anxiously I waited for him to go to sleep again. Once more his head dropped on his breast and he snored. That was the sweetest noise I had heard for a long time.

"I had gnawed and tugged at the thong round my neck in vain; but I knew that what a steady strain will not accomplish a sudden jerk may do. I seized the thong with the grasp of despair, gave it two or three rapid pulls, and to my joy it parted. I was free, but still I had many dangers to encounter. A watchful dog or a sleepless Indian might discover me. Treading with the caution I knew was so necessary, I passed between the bodies of the sleeping redskins and stepped out into the open air. The cold restored my strength. I looked round on every side. The stars were shining brightly above my head, and the lodges of my enemies lay around in the dark shadow of the forest. The neighing of a horse showed me where some of the steeds of the tribe were tethered. I ran towards the spot. I had no time for selection. I threw myself on the back of the first animal I found. The first faint streaks of dawn were already appearing in the eastern sky. Not an instant had I to lose. I should, I knew, be very speedily pursued. I scarcely had time to consider in which direction I should go. The thong which still hung round my neck served me for a bridle. I looked up at the bright stars and turned the horses head towards the south. One thing only I could resolve on, not to pull rein till I was beyond the reach of pursuit. I soon found that I had one of the best horses of the whole stud. Away I went galloping over the snow, fleet as the wind. I could not conceal my trail; but if I had the best steed and an hour's start, I might keep ahead of my pursuers, and fall in with some friendly tribe, or by some other means

obtain assistance before I could be overtaken. My horse was a noble animal. He had, I doubt not, been stolen not long before from the whites, and he seemed glad to have a white man again on his back. Poor beast! I did not spare him. Full fifty miles I went without pulling rein Then I threw myself off and turned his head to the wind to let him regain his strength. But few minutes only I halted; I either heard my pursuers or thought I heard them. Again I mounted and galloped on as before. The noble brute seemed to know the importance of haste. Oh how willingly he went up steep hills, down wild valleys, across streams, over the most rugged ground —nothing stopped him. We came to a broad river. It was frozen over with a sheet of smooth ice, from which the wind had blown the snow. Still on he went, slipping and sliding. Several times I thought he would be down, and yet I dared not check him; but he recovered himself and reached the opposite side in safety. Sometimes we were almost buried in the snow. On the other side of the river we plunged into a deep snowdrift; but he plunged on, and, planting his feet on firm ground, sprung upward again, and on he went, breasting the side of a steep hill. We gained the summit. I looked back for an instant. I thought I could descern in the far distance several black spots. I was sure that they were my pursuers. On I went along the ridge of the mountain. It was stony and free from snow, and I hoped that if my pursuers should discover my trail across the ice they might possibly here lose it. This thought gave me fresh courage. I came to the end of the ridge and descended into the plain. My noble steed was becoming much distressed. Still I valued my life more than his. As long as he could go I must make him go. On he went. Full eighty miles had been passed over since dawn. Neither my horse or I had tasted food. Still I dared not stop. Across the plain we went. Nearly another ten miles were gone over. I felt my horse's legs staggering under him. He breathed heavily, his pace slackened; still he endeavored to spring forward. He staggered more and more, and I had barely time to

throw myself off when down he came to the ground. Once he tried to rise, but again he fell, and his glassy eye told me too plainly that he had destroyed himself in his efforts to save me. Who but the base hearted would be unmerciful to man's most serviceable and sagacious of friends? I had no time to stop and mourn for my gallant steed. Casting but another look on him I ran on over the ground as rapidly as my legs would carry me. I never stopped. I never looked behind. I knew that nothing would turn aside my blood-thirsty pursuers. Night came on; still I ran without slacking my speed. I had been in motion since the morning without food, still the dread of falling into the power of my savage foes gave me supernatural strength. A wood lay before me; I plunged into it. I still could distinguish my course by the stars, and I hoped that my pursuers would be unable to make out my trail. This hope gave me fresh courage, but my strength was failing me, and in a short time, gasping for breath, I fell to the ground, and the blood gushed out of my mouth. I thought I was going to die like my poor horse, but after a time I felt better, and hope revived once more. I lay still in the hopes of recovering my strength. I did not wish to sleep, indeed I knew how dangerous it would be to attempt to do so. As I lay on my back, I saw the moon slowly rise above the still trees, and shed a bright light over the landscape. I gazed at it for some time; then I recollected that by its light my pursuers would certainly be able to follow up my trail. Instantly I sprang to my feet, stiff and full of pains as I felt, and once more I went. I came at last to a rugged hill. I climbed it and following the stony ridge for some way, descended into the plain on the opposite side. On I ran. As before, I thought I heard the shouts and threatening cries of my enemies, and fancied that they must have got to the side of the mountain I was on by some other path. As long as I had any strength I determined to run on. Day at last dawned; I entered a wood. I had my knife in my pocket. I dug up some earth nuts, and chewed some snow. I felt revived, but my legs refused to carry me further. I dis-

covered a hole full of leaves, I threw myself into it; I listened with intense anxiety for any sound made by my pursuers. I could hear none. Exhausted nature at length gave way, and I slept. Whether I slept more than a whole day or only a few hours, I cannot tell. My first impulse was to spring up and continue my flight. But before I left the wood I remembered that I must have more food, so I dug up a further supply of nuts, and then dashed away as before across the plain. I looked hastily around me, but could see no pursuers. Still I knew too well their pertinacity and their devices, to suppose that they would desist from following me, till I was actually in a place of safety. On I went therefore rejoicing in the darkness.

"Suddenly as I went along I heard some strange sounds. These were human voices. I became aware that I was passing near a large body of Indians. They were not my pursuers, but, till I could ascertain who they were. I would on no account entrust myself with them. To turn back was as hazardous as to proceed, so on I went. They heard me and came after me. I expected to lose my scalp after all, when you, my friends, came to my rescue, and here I am; rather battered, I own, but still able and willing to pull a trigger for our mutual defence."

"Spoken like an honest backwoodsman," cried Obed and his brothers. "Friend Short, if you like to join your fortunes to ours you are welcome.'

The old man owned that he had no fancy to hunt by himself, and that after the adventures he had gone through he would gladly leave that part of the country, for as he said, India: vengeance never slumbers, and never dies, as if in exact contradiction to the Christian law of love.

Now that we were surrounded by vindictive enemies, none of us felt inclined to sleep, and I therefore asked Obed to continue an account of his adventures. "Ay, friend, that I will," he answered promptly. "I left the honest Delaware and the bear and her cubs all rolling away in the river together. The cold

water somewhat astonished Mistress Bruin, and made her for an instant let go her gripe. The Delaware took the opportunity of striking his knife with all his force into her neck, and before she could return the compliment, he sprung up the bank, on the top of which I stood ready to assist him. The bear was not killed, but rendered furious by the wound, she began to scramble up the bank after us. The Delaware sprang to get his rifle, while I pointed mine at the brute's head. On she came. I fired, and expected to see her roll over, but the bullet did not strike a vital part, and so she then made savagely at me.

"The Delaware had by this time regained possession of his rifle, and while I threw myself on one side, he fired with unerring aim full at the bear's head. In another instant her claws would have been on my shoulders, and her teeth in my cheeks. The ball struck her. With a fierce growl she attempted to spring forward, but I stepped back, and over she rolled at our feet. The cubs came waddling up to see what was the matter with their mother, and as they were rather too big to be pleasant companions, we were obliged to kill them. We ate some slices of them afterwards. We spent the evening very pleasantly over our fire, and next day at dawn we pushed on, that we might encamp while there was an abundance of light to put up our wigwam and kill any game we might require. Several days passed away without any event of interest to tell you of. The Delaware was an excellent travelling companion, and I believe that without him the Indians would speedily have found me out, and would have left me without a top to my head. We had quitted the banks of the river, and were progressing over a wide rolling prairie. Although the wind when it blew was keen, the sun had still at midday great power. We toiled on through the high grass with not a breath of air, hoping to get across the prairie before nightfall. We could see, from the nature of the ground, very little way on either side of us.

"Suddenly we were conscious of a hot wind blowing on our

right cheeks, and then it came laden with smoke and fine dust. 'On! on!' cried the Delaware, grasping my arm to hasten my steps. There was reason for us to hasten. 'The prairie is on fire, and before long, if we delay, we shall be surrounded by the raging flame,' he exclaimed. 'On! On!' I saw in the far distance a rocky mound, rising out of the prairie, towards which my guide pointed. I saw that he meant that we should seek safety there, but it seemed to me that it was scarcely possible that we should reach it before the fire would overtake us.

CHAPTER IX.

Obed's adventures continued—Journey with the Delaware—The prairie on fire—They fly for their lives—A stampede—A narrow escape on the rock—Long journey—Approach of winter—Their life in a cave—Expected visit from bears—Journey continued—Arrival at the fort—Further adventures with bears and wolves—Save the life of a young chief—Carry him onward till they reach their camp—The young redskin's gratitude—End of Obed's narrative—Fresh alarms—Again the enemy approach.

"THE Delaware and I ran on at full speed through the high grass," continued Obed. "Every instant I expected to be tripped up by its tough roots which trailed along the earth, but my companion, who was well accustomed to the sort of ground, keep me from falling. I asked him, as we ran, why he did not stop, and as I knew to be the custom, cut down and burn a clear space round us, so as to let the conflagration pass by on either side. 'The deer and buffaloes, and other wild animals, would fill the space and trample us to death,' he answered. 'Even now I hear the sounds of their hoofs in the distance—haste! haste!' I tried to listen as I ran, and I fancied that I did hear a low, murmuring, hollow sound, which had a peculiar terror-inspiring effect. The wind blew stronger, the air became denser and more oppressive, and the ashes fell thicker around us. We distinctly heard the noise of the rushing flames. The rock towards which we were running rose before us, but, yet near as it was, the fire came roaring on so rapidly that I fully expected it to overtake us. On it came, hissing and crackling. The air grew hotter and hotter, and more and more oppressive. As I struggled on I felt as if I could scarcely move my limbs. It was like a dreadful dream, when a person fancies that danger is near, and that he cannot fly from it. I gasped for breath. The Indian also was much

distressed. Some things men can get accustomed to, but to have to run for one's life, with a prairie fire roaring at one's side, one does not like a bit more the tenth time it is encountered than the first. 'On, on!' cried out the faithful Delaware. He could run faster than I could, but still he delayed for me. Besides the crackling and hissing of the fire, there was a loud, roaring, trampling, crushing, thundering sound, or mixture of sounds, utterly indescribable. The rock was reached—we clambered up it. We gained the summit. It was a wide open space, entirely free of grass. Almost fainting, I was sinking to the ground, when I saw the Delaware pointing to the plain below us. There, across the ground we had just left, came tearing along in strange confusion, herds of buffaloes, deer, wolves, foxes, prairie-hares, several bears, and even birds, turkeys, prairie-hens, and other wild fowl, all uttering their peculiar cries of terror, and utterly disregarding each other. Not one stopped to prey on another.

"One feeling of intense terror inspired the whole mass. On they flew, fleet as the wind; all they seemed to think of was, that the fire was behind them, and that, unless they would be destroyed, they must fly. Some were left dead or wounded the weak trampled on by the stronger, but still on scampered the mass, with the fire raging at their heels. I saw what would have been our fate, had we not reached the rock before the herd passed by, and I thanked Heaven that we had been preserved. We remained on the rock for some hours, till the ground below was cool enough to enable us to proceed; but, after the heat of the fire, the air felt bitterly cold, and we had no shelter from it. I do not think we could have endured it during the night. We descended, and began to cross the remainder of the plain, but even then our feet struck up sparks fron the yet smouldering ashes, and light clouds of smoke rose up continually, circling round our heads till they were dispersed in the clear atmosphere. Desolate, dismal, and barren looked the country through which we had journeyed on the previous day. Not a vestige remained of animal life, but here and

there appeared the skinless skulls and bones of some hugh buffalo or stately stag, which had long lain there blanching in the sun. The sky had for some time been overcast. The Delaware pointed towards it. 'The winter is coming,' he observed; 'this is not the place to be overtaken in a snow-storm.' I agreed with him; so, in spite of the fatigue which, after my wounds and loss of blood, I felt in a way I had never before done I dragged my heavy legs after him. We reached about nightfall a clump of trees. Under their shelter we lighted or fire, cooked our provisions, and lay down to rest. Often I have thought of those words, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' Constituted as man is, what a blessing truly is the Sabbath! how sweet, how necessary is rest!

"We rose before daybreak, stirred up our fire, cooked and ate our breakfast, and, as the light of day found its way through the trees which surrounded us, we started on our way. The sky was ominously dark, but the snow had not yet began to fall, yet the piercing air told us that it would not long be delayed. The Delaware spoke but little. He evidently did not like the state of things. I had made up my mind from the first to be guided by his judgment. One thing was very certain, that we could not stop where we were. Our only chance of safety depended on our pushing on. 'Where to?' I thought. I saw nothing but the wide, rolling, blackened prairie before me. The sight alone was depressing, independent of the anticipation of coming evil. Hour after hour passed. Not a break appeared in the clouds, not a gleam of sunshine burst forth to cheer us. Still the snow did not fall, and there was nothing to impede our progress. We stopped at noon to dine. A few minutes sufficed us for our frugal meal. The bitter cold did not tempt us to rest longer than was necessary.

"On again we went. 'Where is the wood in which we are to pass the night?' I asked of the Delaware. 'It is yet far off,' was his unsatisfactory answer. Evening was drawing on. I saw a bleak hill, but no wood capable of affording us shelter.

Just then a snow-flake settled on my face. It was a slight thing. How indifferent should I have been to it at other times. Now it made my heart sink lower than it had ever done before. Another and another fell; then down the snow-flakes came rapidly, thickly sprinkling the ground and our garments. The wind sent them driving against us over the prairie. The Delaware pointed to the hill. On towards it we pushed. The snow in a few minutes completely covered the ground, a sheet of white was spread out where lately all had been black, here and there only the taller tufts of grass appearing above. There was no prospect of the snow ceasing to fall. Soon it covered our moccasins and reached to our ankles. Walking became more and more difficult. It was half-way up to our knees, still we pushed on. My companion remained silent. I did not trouble him by asking questions. He had hopes of escaping, or he would, I thought, very likely have sat down where he was and quietly awaited his fate. Had he done so, it would have been my business to rouse him to exertion. The snow fell thicker and thicker. Daylight was rapidly decreasing. It grew less and less. All we could see was the sheet of snow immediately surrounding us. Still my companion went steadily on.

"Backwoodsman as I am, and am proud to be, I should have been completely at a loss in what direction to go had I been left by myself, except I had trusted to the wind. As long as that blew it would have served as a guide, though a somewhat uncertain one. Even that guide proved fickle. The wind fell and the snow came down perpendicularly, or rather on all sides, floating here and there, completely surrounding us. Still my companion went on without hesitation. At first I had walked by his side, now I dropped behind him and trod in his footsteps. This enabled me to keep up with him better. As far as I could judge, I believed his course was straight as an arrow for the point at which he was aiming. The cold was less intense than it had been before the snow began to fall, still I felt that if we were to stop we should very likely be frozen to death. Though I kept as close as I could to my companion,

almost touching him indeed, so thickly did the snow come down that often I could barely distinguish his misty form before me.

"I never felt so helpless; my manhood seemed to have deserted me. I thought if I should stumble and fall, before I could cry out he might be out of my sight and be unable to find me. I confess that all sorts of dreadful fancies came into my head. At last I got ashamed of them, and tried to get a better heart into my body. I began to whistle, but that would not do, then I tried to sing; I got on badly enough in that way also. I don't think the Delaware approved of the attempt. He grunted out something once or twice. Perhaps he was trying to join in the chorus. My voice, indeed, grew fainter and fainter, and at last I was obliged to give up the attempt. My knees, too, were less and less able to support me. I felt them trembling under my weight. Still I toiled on. I would not complain, that would have lowered me in the estimation of my guide, and I would not ask questions, so I remained ignorant as to what prospect there was of our reaching shelter from the storm. At last I found that we were going up hill over rugged ground, and I concluded that we had reached the hill I had seen before it grew dark, we went on for some way up and then down, and then along a level place, and then up again, and I saw a dark object rising on my right side, high above our heads it seemed. It looked to me like a precipice. Presently my guide stopped, so suddenly that I ran against him. Then he turned to the right without speaking, and I followed him. We went on a few paces, and I found that we were in total darkness. No snow fell on me, the air felt comparatively warm, and I was conscious that there was something above my head. 'Stay,' said the Delaware, and I heard the click of his flint and steel. The bright sparks came forth and he applied them to his tinder, and I saw the the glowing mass lowered to the ground; and the countenance of the Indian lighted up as he blew against it till it grew larger and larger, and a bright flame burst forth, and I found that we were in a high arched

cavern. How cheerful the fire looked as it burnt up, and sitting round it we warmed our numbed limbs, and felt that we had found a shelter from the storm. The place had evidently constantly been used for the same purpose. There was a good supply of wood on one side, sufficient to light many a fire for some time to come. Further up the floor of the cavern was strewed with the bones of animals, many of which must have been of enormous size, and have lived in bygone ages. We had killed a deer not long before, so having warmed our hands we set to work to toast some of the meat at the end of our ramrods. The food and warmth once more loosened the Delaware's tongue, and he told me that in five days, after leaving our present position, we should be able to reach Fort Laramie. 'When shall we be able to leave it?' I asked. 'Is there not some probability of our being snowed up?' 'I cannot answer two questions in one breath,' answered the Delaware. 'As to when we can leave the cavern, depends on when the snow ceases falling. It may be in three days, or it may fall for a week or more. As to being snowed up, there is not much probability of that. Should it by any chance drift against the mouth of the cavern, we must cut our way out. But do not fear, we are warm here, we have fire and food. Let us be thankful for the blessings we enjoy.'

"I felt the truth and wisdom of his observations, and having piled up more wood on the fire, we wrapped ourselves up in our buffalo robes, and lay down with our feet towards it. The Indian was asleep in an instant. Though I thought for a minute or so, I very quickly followed his example. We both of us awoke at intervals and made up our fire, but were instantly again asleep, and I do not think I ever enjoyed more refreshing slumber. It was broad daylight when I awoke. I got up and went to the mouth of the cavern; the snow fell as thickly and as fast as ever, but as it did not appear to be blocking up our cavern, that did not concern me.

"After some time the Delaware awoke, and then we toasted some more venison. After he had eaten it, he lay down and

went fast asleep again. I slept a good deal, but could not manage as much as he did. I asked him how he contrived to sleep so much. He laughed calmly. 'When I have thought of what is to be done, why should I think of anything more? Then I sleep to be ready for the work to be done.' Day after day passed by; I began to grow very weary of being shut up in the cavern, though I exercised my limbs by walking up and down it continually, and amused myself by examing the bones of the animals in the interior. Many of them were, I doubted not, of elephants, and lions, and tigers, strange animals which I had read about, while with the others I was familiar enough —buffaloes, bears, wolves, stags, and others. I must own that I was not always quite comfortable when I lay down to sleep, expecting that perhaps we might be visited by a roving bear, or a hungry wolf; and more than once, when I opened my eyes, I fully expected to see one poking his head in at the entrance, or standing by ready to fly at one of us the minute we made any movement. The Delaware did not appear to be troubled about the matter, and certain it is that none came near us all the time we were in the cave. The only reason the Indian could give for our not being attacked, was that the animals were afraid of the spirits of their long dead fellows, whose bones were found there. I suspect that the bears did not come because the cave was so frequently visited, while the wolves kept to the lower grounds, where they were more likely to find animals to prey on.

"The snow ceased at last; but it was not till the tenth day that the Delaware said that it would be hard enough for us to travel on without snow-shoes. We had to ascend the mountain some way, and then to descend. The western side was thickly covered with trees; indeed, the country through which we passed was very rich, and only wanted the hand of an industrious people to make it fertile. We each night reached a good camping place, and as we were fortunate in killing two henturkeys, the Delaware said we should not be pressed for want of food, and we accordingly travelled on at an easy pace. One

forenoon, as we were passing over a height, I knew from the way the trees grew that there was a river below us, though now it was covered with nature's uniform of white. Carrying my eye along it in the far distance, I saw a wreath of white smoke ascending into the clear bright blue sky. There was something inexpressibly cheering in the sight, after going so long without seeing the slightest sign of human beings. However, the smoke might be produced by Indians, and perhaps enemies, whom we must of necessity avoid. I asked the Delaware if he would tell what he knew about the matter. 'That is the fort,' he answered; 'you will there very likely gain tidings of your friends.' My heart bounded within me at the thought of being once more united to my family. 'The sun will sink thus far down before we can reach the place,' said the Indian, pointing to the sky with his hand. This good news added fresh vigor to my muscles; and I found myself not only keeping up with the Indian but actually hurrying his steps. After walking for nearly two hours over very rugged, ground up and down steep and wild hills, we saw before us, on an elevated mound overlooking the river, a strong stockade, over which peeped the roofs of several cottages, while a deeps trench cut round the hill added yet more to the strength of the place. As the Delaware and I drew near, we saw that we were closely watched through a spy-glass. We waved our hands to show that we came as friends, and as we began to climb the steep height towards the fort, several people came out by the door of the fort to meet us. How pleasant it was to be welcomed as a white man by white men, to hear them talk and to be treated as a brother! The honest Delaware, too, was welcomed, for he had brought letters for many in the fort, and undertook to deliver any others in return, with which he might be entrusted. How pleasant it was to have a cup of hot tea, and some soft bread, and the vegetables for dinner, and then to find myself turning into a real bed, with sheets and blankets! The truth is, however, that after sleeping so long in the open air, I found that of a small room so oppressive that I could not breathe, and

had to get up and open the window, and let the cold in. But I am going ahead too fast.

"Having satisfied the governor of the fort all about myself, I inquired if they could give me tidings of my family. What was my satisfaction to find that a party answering their description were encamped in winter quarters not more than a week's journey to the north-west. My friend, the Delaware, knew the spot, and undertook to guide me there. We spent two days longer in the fort to refresh ourselves, and both of us truly needed rest, and then we set out. He had guided me so far in safety, that I felt the most perfect confidence in his courage, judgment and honesty. We got new moccasins at the fort, and our clothes mended, and our friends furnished us with an amble supply of provisions. Though I had been very happy in the fort, and very kindly treated, I felt as I could fancy a man would, just let out of prison, when I found myself once more walking along with my faithful companion over the snow. The weather was very fine, there was no wind, and at times in the day we found it much too hot to wear our buffalo-skin coats. One day with us was much like another, though, by-the-by, we did meet with some few adventures. We fell in with a fine old grizzly bear, whom we turned out of his cave; but the Delaware shot him through the head, and we afterwards had some capital steaks out of him. Then we were pursued by a pack of wolves, but we climbed a tree and let them pass by us. We were, the Delaware computed, about half-a-day's journey from the spot at which we were aiming, when we entered a valley, with a high hill on one side of it, broken into rugged precipices. We had advanced some way along the valley, when, as we happened to look up at the heights above us, we saw a figure rapidly coming down towards it. He was hunting some animal we thought. He did not see his danger. We shouted to him, but it was too late; he did not hear us, and over he went down a frightful precipice. We ran forward, and thinking he must be killed, expected to see his mangled body hanging to some rugged projection in the rock; but the very precipitous character of the cliff had been the means

or his preservation. He had fallen directly into a snow-drift, and though a limb apparently was broken, and he was much hurt, he speedily came to himself. To leave him where he was would have been sheer barbarity; so we told him that we would carry him to my father's camp, where he would be quickly cured. He thanked us much, and consented willingly to do as we advised. Cutting some boughs from the trees which grew around, we speedily formed a litter, on which we placed him. Carrying him between us, we approached the spot where my family was supposed to be encamped. From a hill at a little distance I got a view of it. My heart beat quick at the thought of seeing them all again. They had selected a rocky mound for the sight of their encampment, and had surrounded it with a stockade and ditch, so that it was capable of resisting any attack the Indians were likely to make on it. There was room inside, I calculated, not only for their own huts, but for their cattle and wagons, and a supply of fodder and fuel. They had spared no pains, I guessed, to make themselves secure and comfortable. The very look of the place convinced me that my family were there. As we drew near a gate opened, and several people came out. There were, I saw, father and mother, and sisters, and all my brothers but Joab. Then I feared, as I found, that brother Joab had been killed. I said nothing, for I was afraid to ask about him. They all welcomed me as one from the dead, for they thought that I had been killed and never expected to hear anything of me again, for they had seen me fall, as they had Joab, and he, poor fellow, had been scalped before their eyes, so they had no hopes for him. After they had all done talking to me, I told them about the young redskin, that the Delaware and I had brought. The women at once took charge of him, and doctored him in their own kind way. In the meantime the Delaware was not forgotten, and everybody tried to show their gratitude to him for the service he had been to me. I was several days before the young Indian began to recover; indeed I believe any one but a redskin would have been killed with such a fall as he had had. When he got better he began to talk to us, but we could make out but

little of what he said. At last I begged the Delaware to come to him, as he understood his language. After some hesitation, and a long talk with the Delaware, he told us that he was the eldest son of the chief of the Kioway tribe; that he and his people had planned an attack on our fort, and that it was to take place in three days by that time. He said that his people did not know what had become of him, but that they would not abandon their plans on account of his loss. 'Now,' he added, 'I will go to them, and tell them all you have done for me, and instead of enemies, they will become your friends.' In two days more he was strong enough to move, and he insisted on setting out, saying that he should soon fall in with his people. Off he went, and we waited anxiously his return; but in case of treachery we put everything to rights in the fort to resist an attack. In a few hours the young chief came back with some twenty or more painted warriors in his train—very formidable customers they would have proved if they had come as enemies. Well, to make a long story short when he heard that I was going to set out with my brothers to bring you assistance, he undertook to send twenty of his people with us, while he and the remainder stopped in the neighborhood to guard our camp. We lost no time in getting ready; I was as fresh as a lark; we travelled fast, and came in time 'to do the happy deed which gilds my humble name,' quoth Dick. 'No, no,' exclaimed several of the party, simultaneously, 'honest Obed Ragget never finished a sentence with a quotation from a play, though it was writ by a minister.' 'To confess the truth, no,' said Dick; 'indeed honest Obed's expressions were not always, though highly graphic, grammatically correct, so I have given his narrative in what is generally considered the more orthodox vernacular; yet you have, I own, thereby lost much of the force of his descriptions and no little amusement.' Obed had scarcely finished his account, when from every part of the whole surrounding wood resounded the most terrific war-whoops and unearthly shrieks and cries. Seizing our weapons, we sprang from our seats, and rushed to repel the expected assault."

CHAPTER X.

The redskins attempt to alarm us—Singularly unsuccessful—The enemy at length commence the assault—We bravely defend our camp—Sam discovers that they are Pawnees and Dacotahs—His device to separate their forces—Discovers Noggin among them dressed as a chief—The enemy retire—Sam's expedition to rescue Noggin, which I accompany—Our success—Mr. and Mrs. Noggin—His magnificent appearance as an Indian chief—We push onward and at length reach the camp of our friends the Raggets.

THE redskins knew that we were on the watch for them, as they were not likely to take us by surprise, they thought they could terrify us by their shrieks and hullabaloos. They did not know what we were made of, or they would not wasted their breath in that way. Two of our scouts came hurring in, the other two had, we feared, been surprised and scalped by our enemies. We all stood to our arms in dead silence, waiting the expected attack. Our Indian allies wanted to reply to the war-whoops of our foes, but we judged that as they outnumbered us, we should be much more likely to awe them if we remained in perfect silence. Again and again, several times, those unearthly shrieks broke the silence of the night. I own that they were terror-inspiring, and I was very glad each time when they ceased. It was nearly dawn when once more that hideous war-whoop was heard, and instantaneously the snow-clad ground before us was covered with the dark forms of our foes, streaming out from the forest and climbing up the height towards us. The Raggets, Sam Short, Pipestick, and I took the lead in directing the defence, and we were soon joined by old Waggum-winne-beg, who got up in spite of his wounds and weakness, to give us his assistance. It was evident that our enemies had been reinforced, though it was still too dark to count them with anything like accuracy. Indeed, I don't

exaggerate when I say that our sight was not a little disturbed by the showers of arrows which they sent among us. In spite of their numbers, we rather astonished them with the warm reception provided for their entertainment. Old Short was in his element; calling some ten of the Kioways round him, he was here and there and on every side of the camp at the same moment, firing very rapidly and never throwing a shot away. He must have killed a dozen of our enemies in as many minutes. In about twenty minutes they seemed to have had enough of it, and rushed back under shelter as rapidly as they had come out of it. The dawn appeared. The rising sun spread a ruddy glow over the field of snow already stained with the blood of the slain. We thought that our enemies would retire, but no. Without a moment's warning, on they rushed once more up the height. This time our rifles told with more certain effect than ever before; not a shot was thrown away, and the redskins fell thickly around us on every side.

"What are they about now? they seem to have some scheme in reserve," I observed to Obed. Scarcely had I spoken when some who had retired again came forth, accompanied by a stout, sturdy-looking warrior, who, however, did not seem very anxious to advance. He held a rifle in his hand, which he fired every now and then as he advanced; but he was very long in loading it, and each time his bullet whistled above our heads. His companions were too intent on the attack to observe this. Just then we were joined by old Sam Short. I pointed out the warrior to him.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "those fellows are Pawnees, the very villains from whom I escaped, and that seeming chief is no other than poor Noggin. Tell your fellows not to hurt him, and I will have a talk with him before long. If I can get him to draw off the Pawnees, we may easily settle with the remainder of the Dacotahs, whom you have, I see, handled pretty severely already." Saying this, the old hunter disappeared among the tents, but speedily came back rigged out in the most fantastic fashion, holding a long staff in his hand literally covered with

rags and tatters, which as he held it aloft streamed in the wind. We, meantime, had been effectually keeping the enemy at bay. "I think this will do for the nonce," he exclaimed; "give them one volley more, and then let me see what I can do."

We followed his advice, and the moment we ceased firing, while the enemy were still skipping about to avoid our shots, he rushed from among us, crying out, "Noggin, old friend, tell your fellows that the mighty medicine-man of all the Indians has come to get them out of a great scrape, and that the sooner they take themselves away from this the better. "The Indians astonished at his sudden appearance, hung back, and no one attempted to attack him, as I fully expected they would have done. Noggin, on hearing the voice of his old friend, instantly called his companions around him, we meantime taking care to reserve our fire for our old enemies the Dacotahs. Presently we saw the Pawnees drawing off, while the old hunter, indulging in all sorts of fantastic gestures, came hurrying back to the camp, no one attempting to stop him. I asked him why he had not brought his friend Noggin with him. "Ah, he is an honest fellow," he answered. "He refused to come without Mrs. Noggin. The poor girl has trusted to him, had saved his life, and he would not desert her. I honor him for it, but I do not despair of seeing him and her yet. If he can induce her to come, he will bring her as soon as he can make his escape from her tribe. He has no wish to live the life of a redskin for the remainder of his days. It is my desire, and I think it will be his, to join my fortunes to yours. From what I hear you are bound for California, and I should like to go and try my luck in that country, too. I may be of use to you, and you will afford me that companionship which I begin to feel the want of in my old age. I have no fancy again to run the risk of being scalped or roasted, or having to lie down and die by myself like a worn out old wolf, or other wild beast in the desert." The Raggets and I expressed our satisfaction at the thoughts of having so experienced a hunter as our companion, and that matter was settled off-hand.

The Dacotahs had retired when they saw the Pawnees drawing off. They probably tried to ascertain the cause of this desertion. They made but one more very faint attack, and finding, as we supposed, that their chances of success were less than ever, finally retired out of sight into the wood. We could not restrain our Indian alies from rushing out to scalp the slain, though we warned them against surprise, and charged them not to touch the wounded; but I suspect they did not much heed our words. They came back with fully thirty scalps, saying that our bullets had made such sure work, that every one was killed outright. As the day drew on, we were more and more convinced that our enemies had had enough of it. We sent out our scouts, who felt their way cautiously, following their trails. The chief body of the Dacotahs had gone off to the north and east, while the Pawnees had taken the direction of the northwest. The latter had retired with deliberation and order, while the former had made a hurried retreat. A little later in the day a scout came in, saying that the Pawnees had halted about five miles off. "Then I know the reason why," observed Short. "Noggin has persuaded them to halt, and, depend on it, he will try to escape with his wife. If some of you would aid me, I should like to go and meet him, to help him along." Obed and I and John Pipestick agreed to accompany him, with four of our Indian allies. As soon as it was dusk we set off on our expedition. We crept cautiously along from the very first in Indian file, the scout who had discovered the trail leading, and Short going next. Indeed the man who wishes to keep the scalp on his head cannot be too cautious when in the Indian country, and with enemies in the neighborhood. Not a word was spoken, scarcely a sound was heard, while we kept our rifles trailing by our sides, ready for use at a moment's notice. We could not tell, of course, whether the Dacotahs or Pawnees might not have taken it into their heads to come back and attack us, or, at all events, might not have left some scouts to watch our proceeding. We went on thus, till the sounds of drums beat-

ing, bones rattling, keeping time to the voices of human beings, creating a most unpleasant sort of music, warned us that we were in the neighborhood of the Pawnee camp. It was difficult to say when Noggin might take the opportunity of slipping away. It might be at once, while all the noise was going forward, or it might not be till the inhabitants of the camp were asleep. So we all sat down and watched in silence.

It was agreed that Short should go forward and meet his friend, so as not to alarm him. I must own that I had fallen asleep, and was dreaming of old England and my comfortable arm chair, when I was awoke by finding my companions rising and beginning to move on at a rapid rate,—I was so sleepy that I could not tell where. On we went, no one speaking, following each other, as before so I judged that it would be wise not to speak either.

It was still very dark, all I could do was to see the person immediately preceding me. On, on, we went; at last we began to go up hill, and I found that we were approaching our own camp. The light of our fires was shining brightly from it. Obed answered with a cheerful voice to the challenge of our sentinels, and as we entered our stockade I found for the first time, that our party was increased by two persons. One was habited in the full costume of a redskin chief, and a big commanding-looking fellow he was; the other was an Indian squaw; she was a fine but modest girl, and she seemed to shrink back with true feminine timidity from the gaze of so many strangers. To my surprise I found that the handsome chief, who decidedly would have created a great sensation in any London drawing-room, and perhaps, have won the hearts of half-a-dozen young ladies, and persuaded them to settle down as the mistress of his faithful retainers in his extensive territories in the Far West, was no other than Tom Noggin, whose adventures I had just been hearing. I do not know what sort of an orator Tom might have made as an Indian, his English vernacular was not of the choicest. "I wish some of you chaps would get this young women of mine stowed away

with some of her own kind among the Indians, they'll know her, and comfort her a bit, poor thing," quoth Tom. The words and tone were really kind and kindly meant, but they sounded odd as coming from the lips of a full fledged redskin warrior. Noggin at once fell into old Short's plan, and having all laid down to take some rest, we packed up our traps and were once more on the move. We accompanied the kind-hearted Ottoes three days further on their road till they considered themselves out of the reach of their enemies. Had I pressed John Pipestick, I believe he would have brought his wives and joined our party, but I did not altogether admire the young gentleman's notions of things in general, so I kept silent on the matter. I had an affectionate parting from old Waggum-winne-beg, who once more pressed his beautiful Fire-fly on me; but my heart was proof against even her brilliant attractions. The young lady pouted a little when I wished her good-bye, and, I have no doubt, thought me a man of very bad taste.

Once more our course was turned towards the west. With a good supply of ammunition, little baggage, and forming as we did a band of practiced hunters and backwoodsmen, together with a body of faithful allies, we had no fear as to the result of an attack which any Indians might venture to make on us, provided we exercised all necessary precaution in our advance. More than once we were aware that Indians were on our trail, or hovering round our camp; but when they ascertained the state of preparation we were in, being assured that they would have to buy victory, if they got it at all, at a very dear rate, they thought it wiser not to attack us.

We expected to have been pursued by the Pawnees, but for some reason or other they did not seem to wish to get back Noggin or his wife. They followed us, however, and ten days afterwards two of them made their appearance in our camp. We watched them narrowly, for they are thievish fellows, and would have stolen anything they could have laid hands on. They came, they said, to bring a message from their chief to

his daughter, which as far as we could make out, was equivalent to his blessing; telling her at the same time that as she had chosen to marry a white man, she must follow his fortunes for the future, and not look to the red men for support. The young lady replied that she was perfectly contented with her choice, and had no intention of going home again. Short all the time kept out of sight of the Pawnees, for he thought that his appearance would not fail to enrage them; he advised us, however, to follow their trail as they went away, to ascertain in what direction they were going, and to assure ourselves that they were not plotting some piece of treachery. We found, however, that they went right away to the northeast, and were not likely to trouble us any more. We traveled steadily on, making good twenty miles at least.

The instant we arrived at a wood or other fit place for camping, some collected wood and lighted fires, others tore down strips of bark and branches of trees to form lean-tos or wigwams, while the sportsmen ranged round to look for game, and the scouts explored the neighborhood to ascertain that no enemies were lurking near. Mrs. Noggin made herself very useful in cooking our provisions, and her husband and Short helped her. The latter had not yet recovered from his long run and the exertions he had made to free himself, and it seemed wonderful that he should be able to support the fatigue of travelling as well as he did. Altogether we led a very pleasant life; but I was not sorry, I own, to see in the distance the stockade in which my old friends the Raggets, and two or three other families who had associated themselves with them, had passed the winter. We arrived just in time before the frost broke up. After that, till the warm dry weather began, travelling would have been very difficult. Our friends were very glad to see us all back again safe, and gave a hearty welcome to old Short and to Noggin and his wife. They were not people to turn up their noses at a redskin. With all due respect to my white friends, Mrs. Noggin appeared to great advantage alongside of them. She was a very well-mannered, amiable, kind, sweet

young woman, and though some of her ways were not just quite what a refined Englishman would admire, I do not think that friend Noggin objected to them, and they seemed as happy as possible. We had altogether not an unpleasant time in the stockade, and we had plenty of work in repairing the wagons and tents, and in making other preparations for our further progress through the wild passes of the Snowy Mountains. The travelling, barring the attacks from the redskins, had hitherto been easy; we were now to enter upon a region wild and rugged in the extreme, where we should have to encounter dangers innumerable from grizzly bears, avalanches, mountain torrents, and steep precipices, added to those we had already gone through. However their contemplation in no way daunted any of our party. From old Mr. Ragget's forethought and judgment, he had amply supplied his camp with provisions before the winter set in, and the same qualities he was now exerting in making preparations for our journey. We thus avoided many of the disasters and miseries from which so many parties of emigrants suffered proceeding over the same route in following years.

CHAPTER XI.

Our winter encampment—Our huts—How we spent our time—A night alarm—Visit from a grizzly—My encounter with the same—Short saves me—We start in search of Mrs. Bruin—We enter the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains—Short's battle with the bear—His perilous situation—Still in danger—We go round to assist him—The snow moves though the bear does not, and we find ourselves on the top of an avalanche—A most unpleasant mode of locomotion.

I CANNOT say that I looked forward with any great degree of satisfaction to the idea of spending the remaining months of the winter, without books or any other means of intellectual enjoyment, in the encampment at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. The Raggets were very worthy people, and kind and considerate in every way; but some of our other companions were somewhat rough and uncouth, and none of them were addicted to literary pursuits, so that there were not six readable volumes of any sort or description to be found among all the party. At times I felt quite a craving for books, when my fingers grew weary mending harness, or manufacturing snow-shoes or moccasins; when conversation, which was never very brisk, altogether flagged. Still I had one great resource, and that was my notebook, though what I was putting into it my companions were very much puzzled to guess. My friends at home will not have much difficulty in guessing what I was writing about. Take it all in all, however, we spent a very pleasant time up among the snow, though it was brought to a conclusion rather sooner than we expected. We had plenty of provisions; we had made ourselves tolerably snug; our numerous well-armed party might set any prowling redskins at defiance; and, above all things, we had laid in such a stock of good humor and good nature, that we had nothing like a quarrel or an angry dispute during the whole of the time. We also

cut out plenty of employment for ourselves, and in spite of the cold, were never long shut up in our huts without making an excursion in one direction or another. Sam Short, Obed, and I, with the other Raggets, slept in one hut by ourselves. It was the outer hut of all, and forming part of it was our principal store, in which the greater part of our provisions were kept. Here were piled up casks of flour, and sugar, and salted meats, and fish, and many other necessary articles. We none of us were much addicted to lying long in bed; but when we did turn in, we slept sounder than, I am sure, any tops ever did. We might generally have all snored as loud as a dozen bears growling away in concert, without in the slightest degree disturbing each other. One night, however, a piece of salt tongue had stuck somewhere on its downward passage, or Mrs. Ragget had given me to strong a bowl of green tea, as a special mark of her favor, or from some other unaccountable cause, I could not for some time get to sleep. I found out that Sam Short did snore, and most lustily and variously too, with notes resembling what one might fancy a broken-winded bagpipe with a bad influenza would give forth more than any other sounds. My other friends were not much behind him in the loudness of their snores, though rather less varied and musical. At length, in spite of the delicious concert, I did manage, by dint of counting and repeating my own name over and over again, and other similar devices, to get into a sort of dose. Still, though I was asleep, I could hear all the noises as clearly as before, only I forgot where I was, and a variety of strange and ever changing notions came into my head.

I thought that I was at sea, when a violent storm arose, and that a hugh whale got hold of the vessel, and towed her on at a terrific rate, spouting away and roaring most furiously. Suddenly there was a crash and I found that the whale had dragged us against a rock, and ran itself on shore. There it lay floundering away, till suddenly it gave a curious kick with its tail, and sprung back again right over our heads into deep water. I never saw a whale, or indeed any creature for that matter,

give such a leap, I had very serious doubts, however, whether it was a real whale after all. As it went off skimming over the sea, it looked back with such a wicked expression in its little twinkling eye, as much as to say, "There, I've done for you, I hope you may like it;" at the same time snorting and blowing louder than ever, in a way most unusual, at all events for whales, which, except when in a flurry, are generally quiet, well behaved creatures. The boiling sea soon knocked the vessel to pieces, and the crash of the wreck made me start up to swim for my life. There really had been a crash, though not so loud as I supposed, for it had not awakened the rest of the sleepers. The noise still continued, as if some one was breaking into the hut or store, and turning over the articles piled up in it. I jumped into my clothes, for with the thermometer twenty degrees below zero, it is not pleasant to run out without some covering, and calling up my companions, seized my rifle and axe, ever ready at hand, and rushed out to ascertain what was the matter. I fully believed that the camp was attacked by redskins, and that we were about to have a desperate affray. The door of the store was close to that of our sleeping hut, but it was closed of course at night. I opened it and sprang in with my axe, ready to strike, hoping by the suddenness of my attack to scare the Indians, and prevent them from defending themselves. The moon was shining with a splendor which she never exhibits through the denser atmosphere of merry England, and she was just then casting her beams through the open doorway. There was a window in the hut which had been boarded up, but the boards had been torn away and a glistening sheet of snow was seen through it. Thus there was enough light in the shed to render a lantern unnecessary. I started back; for, instead of the party of redskins I expected to see, my eyes fell on a hugh grizzly bear, who was busily rolling the casks about, in a vain attempt to get at their contents. He was a ferocious-looking monster, gaunt and hairy, and had evidently been driven out to forage in our camp by the pangs of hunger. When he saw me he gave forth a fierce

growl of defiance, and instead of decamping, as I expected he would, he made a desperate rush at me. I stepped back and lifted my axe, intending to make its sharp edge fall with all my strength on his head; but he was to quick for me, and seizing my arm, in another instant the savage brute had me fast locked in his deadly embrace. He would have killed me in an instant, I verily believe, had I not as he caught me, shoved the head of the axe into his open mouth, where it served the purpose of a gag, and considerable incommoded him. It may be supposed that I sung out pretty lustily at the same time for help. As to doing anything for myself, I found that was impossible, beyond the holding the axe with all my might in the bear's mouth, I felt certain that the moment it got out would be my last.

"Help! help! Obed, Short! Quick, quick!—a huge grizzly bear has got me," I shouted.

The monster seemed to comprehend the meaning of my cries; for he made off with me through the aperture by which he had entered, carrying me along as easily as if I was an infant in arms. As he made off through the window, my companions, whose responding shouts I had just before heard, made their appearance at the door. It would have been easy for them to shoot the bear, but in doing so they would very likely have hit me, so I begged that they would not make the attempt. They therefore followed the bear and me with their glittering axes in hand. If my weight did not prove much of a hindrance to him, my axe at all events did, and they were not long in overtaking us. A bear's winter coat is almost as impervious as a suit of armor, and for some time, though they hacked away at him very lustily, their axes had but little effect. At length, Short, who had his rifle loaded in his hand, and was ever as cool as a snow-ball, which, I conceive is cooler than a cucumber, managed to get ahead of the bearish marauder, and looking him full in the face, levelled his weapon.

"Shall I fire, Dick?" he asked. "I know that I can hit him."

"Yes, yes; fire," I grunted out as well as I could; for the brute, fearing that he was going to lose me, began to give me some unpleasantly strong hugs. I was afraid also that should my strength fail me he might get the axe out of his mouth, when he would have soon made mincemeat out of my nose.

"I'll hit his right eye, then," cried Short.

"Fire," I cried. There was the crack of his rifle, a loud roar, and I found myself well bespattered with bear's grease, rolling over and over in the snow; but at length bruin turned on his back, opened his claws, and to my great delight I found myself free. On jumping out of bed I had slipped on my thick buffalo-skin coat, which fastened round the waist with a thong, and this had much preserved me, or I should have been mangled terribly. As it was, I could scarcely rise to get clear of the bear; and if my friends had not come to my assistance I could not have crawled home. Bruin was dead and fit for smoking. While Obed helped me along, the rest dragged him to the camp, where we found all the rest of the men afoot to ascertain what was the matter. I went to bed feeling very much bruised and knocked about, but by rubbing myself over plentifully with grease I was next morning tolerably limp and pliable. After breakfast we cut up the bear, but as may be supposed, he was in very bad condition, nearly all sinews and bones, though when in good condition he could not have weighed less than eight hundred pounds. We, however, managed to get some ham and a few steaks out of him, and a small supply of fat, while his skin afforded a very acceptable addition to our bed coverings. Just as the operation was concluded, Short, who had gone out, came back, saying that, a little snow having fallen in the first part of the night, he could make out the bear's trail.

"If we follow it up, we may come upon Mrs. Bear's lodgings, and find some young ones at home. Who's for the game?" he exclaimed. The project suited our tastes, and the young Raggets and I, with two or three others, declared ourselves ready to set out forthwith. Off we set, with a little pememi-

can and bread in our pockets, and our rifles and long poles in our hands, fully expecting some good sport. Short said that the she-bears and cubs are supposed to hybernate; but that no doubt we should be able to poke them out of their holes. We soon left the plain, when the trail led us up among the rugged defiles of the mountains. I confess that I could not have distinguished the marks of the bear's feet in the snow; but Short's more practiced eye did so, and he every now and then pointed them out to me, so that we knew that we were on the right track. Our undertaking was a very hazardous one. There is not a more ferocious, at the same time powerful and cunning, monster among all wild beasts than the grizzly bear. When he meets a man he has something to fight for besides the honor of victory; for he eats them for his dinner or supper as the case may. As we advanced we found ourselves in a scene of almost terrific wildness. Dark rocks rising out of the snow towered above our heads, so as to completely shut us in, while mountain ranges appeared one beyond the other, showing us the elevation we had attained. The old grizzly had certainly chosen a very inaccessible post for his domicile. The cold was very intense, though the exercise we were performing kept our blood in circulation. I own that I felt very much inclined to turn back, for the hug the old bear had given me had made my bones ache, and as I doubted, as the French say, "whether the game was worth the candle;" in other words, whether it was worth while running so great a risk as we were doing, and getting so cold, and enduring so much fatigue, merely for the sake of killing an old she-bear. However I said nothing, as I knew my companions would not enter into my views of the matter. On we plunged further and further into the wild recesses of the mountains, till Short made some remarks which led us to suspect that even he began to doubt whether we should find the bear after all.

"Well, Sam, but where's the trail?" asked Obed, looking round.

"The trail, boy; why, that's just gone and lost itself long

ago," answered Sam, with a quizzical look on his dried-up countenance.

"If the trail has lost itself, don't let us go and follow its example," remarked Elihu Ragget, laughing. "However, I vote we sit down and have some dinner, while we agree what's next to be done."

His proposal met with universal assent. We accordingly all sat down on the snow in the most sheltered spot we could find and opened our store of provisions, but Sam Short very quickly jumped up, and taking his share in his hand said he would go and explore a little ahead while we finished our repast. We were none of us sorry to rest; but before we had quite finished our frugal meal, a loud shout was borne down the glen to our ears. We had little doubt that it was Sam calling to us. We seized our rifles, and rushed on. We had not gone far before we saw him standing in front of a large rock, and in the rock there was a cavern, and at the mouth of the cavern there appeared a hugh she grizzly bear rubbing her eyes, Elihu declared, as if just awoke out of her winter's sleep. I rather think she was licking her lips at the thoughts of the repast she was going to make off Sam Short. She would have found him a tough morsel I suspect. Why she did not at first rush on and try to gobble up our friend I could not tell, till Elihu observed that she probably had her cubs inside the cave, and that she was guarding them. Our appearance, however, instead of daunting her increased her rage, and with a savage roar she began to waddle towards Short. He retreated slowly. We sang out to him to give him confidence. He had before not thought it prudent to fire, lest, as was very likely, his shots should not kill the bear; but when he heard our voices, he lifted his rifle and fired. I thought that the ball had gone through her head; but I suppose that it did not, because on she came at poor Sam faster than ever.

Near the cavern was a precipice, with a glen or gully below it. The precipice did not go sheer down, but there were several ledges on the way covered with snow, while the bottom of

the glen was filled with snow, how deep it would have been difficult to ascertain. As we drew nearer we discovered to our dismay, that this glen ran up between where we then stood and the cavern, to get to which Short had made a considerable circuit, though his keen eye had detected it from the hill on which we were. How to render him the most effectual assistance was now the difficulty. While some ran round, Obed and I went to the edge of the glen to fire at the bear across it. As the bear advanced, Short sprang back and seized the barrel of his rifle to use it as a club. A walking cane would have been of as much use to him. Still he wielded it gallantly, and gave the bear an ugly knock on the nose. This naturally enraged Mrs. Bruin, and grasping the fire-arm she pressed on. Poor Sam! One of three dreadful deaths seemed prepared for him, either to be torn by the bear or to be dashed to pieces down the precipice, with the very great chance of being shot by us, his friends, should we attempt to fire at the bear. He dared not look back to see where he was going, lest the bear should seize him. He felt his left foot over the edge of the precipice. "Fire, fire," he shouted, dropping on his knees almost under the bear. Mrs. Bruin had sense enough to know that the consequence of a fall to her would be very unpleasant, and she was as unwilling as Sam to fall into the ravine. She therefore instinctively drew back. That instant one ball entered her head, and another her shoulder. The former from my rifle staggered her. It prevented her from seizing Short with her teeth; but what was our terror to see the snow give way under our companion's feet, and to all appearance inevitable destruction awaiting him. He struggled violently to save himself, and just as the greater part of his body was over he caught hold of one of the hind paws of the bear, who had fallen on her back, and lay kicking furiously in an attempt to rise. Sam, however, held on with all his might. It seemed his only chance of safety. I was afraid lest the bear in her struggles should slip over also. Neither Obed or I had been idle while watching the scene. We both loaded our rifles, and now stood ready once

more to fire. By moving a little on one side, we saw that we could get a good shot at her without hitting Short. Not a moment was to be lost. Running on I fired, Obed followed my example. The bear's struggles grew less violent, and Sam began to try and haul himself up by her leg. It was a dangerous proceeding; there being an inclined plane at the edge, his weight appeared to move the body of the bear on. She could not rise, but she turned round and dug her sharp claws into the snow to save herself. Now, instead of wishing her to die, we were anxious that she might survive till the rest of the party could get up to her. Her growls became more and more feeble. She could scarcely hold on another minute. Poor Sam! We trembled for his fate. We shouted to the rest of the party to hasten on. They had had a difficult place to cross in single file at the head of the gully. Now they came on, hurrying over the snow. The bear gave two or three convulsive struggles. I wished that I could have leaped across the chasm to poor Sam's help. I thought that the bear was slipping down again. If she had got any way on her, as sailors say, it was evident that the united strength of the party could not stop her. They sprang on, and just as I felt sure the bear would have slipped over the precipice, they seized her by the fore-paws. She was not dead, nowever, for in return for the act of kindness she made some desperate attempts to bite them.

"Haul away, haul away," sang out Sam. and they did haul with all their might. Though tney could not move the bear they prevented her from slipping down. She gave several severe kicks with her hind foot. Sam clung on to it, and by the most violent efforts managed to drag himself up by her shaggy coat till two of the party caught hold of his collar and hauled away till they got him up away from the edge and placed him in a rather safer position, but still not one free from danger. For the first time for some minutes I breathed freely, and as we could do no more where we were, Obed and I hurried round to help the rest. When we arrived the bear had

received her quietus, but it was astonishing how many shot and what terrific blows she had received before she was killed. We were congratulating ourselves on the additional supply of hams and steaks she would afford us, when a crack appeared in the snow just below our feet, and to our horror we found the whole mass, carrying us and the carcass of the bear with it, was slipping off over the precipice

CHAPTER XII.

We feel as if we were going over the falls of Niagara—Smothered by snow—We appear by degrees—Obed missing—We give him a warm bath inside the bear—Our dangerous predicament—How to get out of the ravine—Sam appears above us—We climb out with no little difficulty—The bear's cave—Having had enough bear hunting we return home—Find a native visitor, who informs us that we may expect soon an attack from an overwhelming force of redskins.

WE were all standing round the carcass of the huge she-bear, when it and the surrounding mass of snow began perceptibly to glide onwards over the edge of the terrific precipice. I have seen a poor fellow sitting in a boat, utterly beyond his control, gliding rapidly down the rapids towards the falls of Niagara. Quicker and quicker it has moved, till, reaching the edge, it has seemed to hover for a moment, as if, unwilling to make the fatal plunge, and then over it has leaped with the rapidity of lightning, and it and its hapless occupant have been forever hid from human sight. I felt at the moment very much the same sort of sensations which I can fancy the occupant of the boat must have experienced, as the mass of snow, increasing in speed, rapidly neared the precipice. From where I was, I had not the slightest power to leap off it. I fancied that all my companions were in a similar condition. There is an eastern story, in which a man puts his head in a basin of water, and during the few seconds he holds it there, he finds that he has gone through the adventures of a lifetime. I do not think that many seconds could have passed from the moment that the snow began to move, till Short and I, and the rest, found ourselves, with the body of the bear, rolling over and over, and bounding from rock to rock, amid confusing heaps of snow; down into the bottom of the glen.

How I am alive to tell the tale I do not know, and that fact makes people listen to me with no small amount of incredulity. I was more blinded, stunned, and confused than I had ever been in my life before, and each bound I made I thought would knock the breath out of me; but as for reaching the bottom, I never expected to do that—at all events alive. Now I got a kick from one of my companions in misfortune; now I was knocked against the hairy carcass of the bear; now I was almost suffocated with the overwhelming masses of snow which were showered around me. One thing I own—I did not just then think much about anybody else; I could not help anybody, and I knew that no mortal could help me. Down I went, as I was saying, bounding away, snow above, below, and round me. At last I was quiet. I opened my eyes—I was under the snow—I felt a suffocating sensation. "After having got thus far without broken limbs, it won't do to have the breath squeezed out of my body for want of exertion," said I to myself, working away with arms and shoulders, till, as a chicken cracks the shell of its egg, I broke through the covering of snow which was above me, and once more I popped my head into daylight. I was in the midst of a sea of snow, the hind paw of the big bear was close to me, so I hoped that friend Short was not far off, while I could make out several of my other companions struggling up through the snow around me. High above us towered the cliffs, and it seemed indeed wonderful that any of us could come down such a height alive. There is a Greek fable, I remember reading as a boy at school, of the ground being sown with teeth, and out of it coming armed men. I cannot help thinking that we must have looked very much like those ready-made heroes, as I and my companions struggled up out of the snow. Elihu Ragget was the first who joined me. Sam Short did not appear; I told Elihu that I thought he must be near—probably under the bear, and that if not released, he would certainly be smothered. So, without a word more, we set to work with our hands, shoveling out the snow as well as we could. We thought, as we worked away, that we heard a

groan. This made us redouble our exertions to release our friend. We had not been a minute at work, when a shout reached our ears, and on our looking up, there appeared the very man we were in search of, standing on a ledge of rocks high above our heads. He seemed unhurt, and he was shouting to us to ask how we were. We thought, therefore, that we must have been mistaken as to the groan, when some one asked, "Where is Obed Ragget?"

"Oh, lads, help me!" cried Elihu; the thought that his young brother lay buried beneath our feet, and that he had not missed him, striking him with shame.

"Ay, ay," was the answer, as we all set to with even more energy than before. We dug and dug away round the bear, till at length a man's leg appeared, and then his body, and in a few seconds the snow was cleared away, and my friend Obed Ragget was drawn out of the snow. But we gazed at him with sorrow, for not a spark of life appeared in him. The rest were going to give him up as dead, but I entreated them not to despair. I examined him, and found that, as far as I could judge, there was not a bone broken, and when I put my mouth down to his, I felt sure that he still breathed.

"What he wants is warmth," said I, just then recollecting that the body of the bear would still afford it. No sooner thought of than done. It was a desperate, and not altogether a pleasant remedy. We cut a huge slit in the body of the bear, and stripping off Obed's outer garments, we clapped him in, keeping only his head outside, while all of us stood round to assist in giving warmth. We watch anxiously for the result. First one eye opened, then another; then he sighed heavily; and at last he sang out, and asked where he was. In a little time he laughed quietly.

"Don't call me a cub," said he, "that's all; I think that I am wonderfully better. I am much obliged to you and the bear, but now I would just as soon come out into the world again." After this we had no longer any anxiety about him, and certainly our remedy had a very wonderful effect in re-

storing him to animation. Now came our difficulty as to how to get out of the gully into which we had fallen. There was an outlet, but the way to it was evidently almost impracticable, and where it might lead we could not tell. Besides this, there was Sam Short perched like an eagle above our heads; only Sam, not having wings like an eagle, could not get down to us, nor, as far as we could see, could we get up to the top of the cliff above him. We shouted, but we could not make each other hear.

"If the big bear was up to the top, we should not be long before we should be up to him," observed Obed; "Sam would soon cut her hide into strips and haul us up." We looked about; as to climbing up, that was out of the question. For fifty feet above our heads there was a perpendicular wall of rock. Above that there were numerous ledges or platforms, and the cliff seemed comparatively easy to climb. While we were looking about and discussing the matter, we saw Sam attempting to climb up the cliff. After many attempts he succeeded in reaching the top, and disappeared from our sight. He was absent for some time, and when he was again seen, he had a coil of something or other, we could not exactly make out what, round his neck. We now saw him, after carefully examining the cliff below him, begin to descend. We watched him anxiously, for our very existence depended on his success. He reached at last the place where he had before stood, then he cautiously commenced descending still lower.

"What donkeys we have been!" suddenly exclaimed Elihu; "the coil of stuff he has got won't drag any of us up, we must make a rope for ourselves." We quickly had our knives going, and soon had bruin completely flayed, and his hide cut up into short strips joined together. All the time we were at work, we every now and then looked up to see how Sam was getting on. The fear was that he might slip on the frozen rock, and come toppling down unable to save himself. Just as we had finished our rope, a shout from him proclaimed to us that he had reached the lowest ledge he could hope to gain. Without a

moment's delay he began to unwind his line. It was a very thin one, and had numerous knots or joints in it. As we watched it, we were in doubt whether the end would reach us; it just came down above our heads. By leaping up we could touch it; but as to making a rope fast to the end, that was out of the question. Sam soon discovered our difficulty. The rope was drawn up a little and then down it came, so that we could make fast to it the end of our newly formed bear's-skin rope. "Haul away!" we sang, and up it went.

There was a doubt, however, whether that would be long enough. We watched it anxiouly as it drew near the end, and then up, up, up it went, far beyond our reach. We went back and shouted to Sam. What he said in return, we could not make out. Here was a bitter disappointment indeed. Our labor had been fruitless; our hopes of escape well nigh vanished. Presently we saw the end of the rope descending till it came easily within our reach. Short directly afterwards, appeared at the edge of the cliff.

"What will you do? Shall I haul you up or will you climb up?" he asked.

We were unanimously of the opinion, that it would be safer to climb up, as we might help ourselves a little by placing our feet on the inequalities in the side of the cliff, and there would be less chance of the rope chafing and breaking. We drew lots should go up first. The lot fell on Obed.

"Stand from under if I come down," he said, laughing and seizing the rope. Up he began to mount. He was very active and muscular in proportion to his weight. Still it was no light undertaking to have to ascend such a height. For his sake, as well as our own, we watched him with intense anxiety. Up, up he went. Now he swung off from the cliff, now his feet were planted on a ledge of rock, and he stood there to rest. Then again on he went. The fresh hide stretched fearfully, and it seemed as if to a certainty it would give way. There was no turning back, however. Now he came to a part of the cliff where he had to depend entirely to the rope. With

hands and knees, and feet, he worked away. None but a seaman or a backwoodsman could have accomplished the undertaking so rapidly, if at all. He was almost at the top. Sam reached over to help him. We held our breath. Now seemed the critical moment. How was he to scramble up over the edge of the cliff, exhausted as he must be with his exertions? Sam seized him by the collar, and throwing himself back, dragged him up by main force. Now we all uttered a loud shout of congratulation, for thus far Obed was safe. Three or four of the other men followed. The last having more friends to help them over the edge of the cliff found it easier than Obed had done. My turn came at last. Only Elihu and another man had to follow. My arms ached as I got half way up, and the sickening idea came over me that the bear's hide was chafed, and would break with me just as I got up to the most critical part. I rested for a moment on the last spot which afforded space for my feet, and then swung off into mid air. I now knew the sensations which my companions must have experienced. They were very much like those which one has occasionally in a nightmare sort of dream; to feel that one ought to be climbing up, and yet scarcely to have strength to lift one's arms. It must be remembered that we were all clad to keep out extreme cold, and that a buffalo coat is a pretty heavy weight to have on one's shoulders even under ordinary circumstances. My great consolation was, that the snow was pretty soft, and that if I did fall, I might possibly, having once taken the tumble, escape without breaking my neck. To make a long story short, I did reach the ledge at last, and so did the rest of my companions; and then we hauled up the bear's hide, and commenced our still more perilous ascent to the top of the cliff. By the by, Elihu and the other man had bethought them that we might be hungry after our exertions, and had brought up a supply of bear steaks, which added not a little to their weight. I doubt if one man alone could have succeeded in scaling that height, for it must be remembered that Sam Short had only gone up the higher part. Still, with a number together, all

heartily assisting each other, we found the task comparatively easy. When we came to a difficult place we shoved the lighter one up first, and he let down a rope, and the rest hauled themselves up by it. At length we all stood on the top of the cliff, not far from the bear's cave, and when we looked down into the valley we were indeed surprised that we had escaped with our lives, and I hope that we all felt truly thankful for our preservation. Short now told us that he had, when he had before gone up to the top, caught and killed one of the young bears, and had cut up its hide to make a line, but that one or more still remained. I had a great fancy for a young bear, so Obed and I resolved to try and capture one. Accordingly, while the rest of the party were cutting some wood to light a fire for the sake of cooking the bear steaks, Obed and I started away with part of our rope towards the cave.

"I suppose there are no more big bears inside there," said Obed; "they are mighty ugly customers to beard anywhere, but especially in their own den."

"No fear," I answered; "if one had been in there, he would have appeared long ago. We shall only find a cub or two, and there will not be much difficulty in capturing them."

I ought to have said that most of the party had recovered their fire-arms. Obed and I had left our rifles far back, away from the snow which had slipped with us over the cliff, so that we had them now uninjured. The cave was large and for some distance there was light enough to enable us to see our way, but it at length became so dark, that we could not see ahead. All we could do was to feel our way with our rifles.

"I think we must be near the end" said I at last. We had a tinder-box; Obed struck a light. The blue glare of the match showed us two hairy bundles rolled up near the walls of the cave. While he lighted another match I rushed up to one of the bundles, which I found, by receiving a sharp bite, was a little bear. I soon, however, had the young gentleman's fore paws bound tightly together, and dragged him out towards the mouth of the cave. Obed seized the other, while the match

was still burning on the ground, and we thus had them both captives. We brought them in triumph to our friends, who were feasting on their mother. We did not offer them any of the poor brute, and I dare say they thought us very greedy for not doing so, not probably entering into our delicate feelings on the subject. Having refreshed ourselves, all hands agreeing that we had had quite enough of bear-hunting for the day, we set off on our return to camp, We had no little difficulty in getting our young bears to move along. Poor little things! they did not like the cold, and of course missed ther mother. Still, by dint of poking and pulling, we made them keep up with the rest of the party. Now, the excitement was over, I must say that I never felt so tired in my life. Still I would not relinquish my captive. Indeed it would have been barbarous for us to have done so, as they would have died of cold and starvation. At last, at night-fall, we did get in. We found all the camp in a great state of agitation, very much on our account, and not a little on their own. When we inquired what was the matter, they took us into the general sitting-room, and pointed to an Indian, habited in the full-dress warrior costume of winter, who was squatting down before the fire. He looked pleased when he saw us, and counted our numbers.

"Good!" he exclaimed, in the deep-toned voice of his people. "Now fight well; drive away bad man." the English vocabulary of our guest was very small, and no one in the camp had been able to comprehend exactly the information he came to give, except that an attack might be expected, at some time or other, from a large tribe or tribes, hostile to the white man. Short, however, who understood several of the Indian dialects, now came in to act as interpreter. The information he elicited was still more alarming. It was to the effect that before long we might expect to be attacked by overwhelming numbers of redskin warriors, from whom, if they took us by surprise, we should have very little chance of escaping.

CHAPTER XIII.

Short and Noggin act as interpreters—We prepare to move onwards—The White Dog—We guard against surprise—I go out as a scout—Pursued by redskins—Return to the camp—More visitors—We suspect treachery—White Dog warns us that they are enemies—We prepare for a start while Noggin holds a palaver with the Indians—They are allowed to enter—Their chief's treacherous attempt to kill Laban, but gets killed himself—We seize the rest—Noggin's regret that we did not kill them—We start on our journey—White Dog accompanies us—We push on—Our first encampment—A fresh alarm.

THE report brought by the Indian warrior of the intended attack of the redskins on our camp soon collected all the party together in the common hall. Our men had pretty well strung nerves, and the women, old and young, were in no way given to fainting; so, although the latter listened with the greatest attention, and the former spoke gravely and deliberately, there was not much excitement, and no great amount of anxiety perceptible on their countenances. Our feather-bedecked, skin-clothed visitor was not much addicted to giving forth long-winded speeches as are some of his countrymen. Short and Noggin were his chief interrogators, as they understood his dialect, and they translated his answers for the benefit of those who did not. He was asked how it was he became acquainted with the information he had brought us.

"Can you say, O whiteskins, how the blossoms come on the trees? how the mist fills the air? how the snow melts on the ground?" was his reply. "I heard it; I speak the truth; that is enough."

"But when, friend, are the coming?" asked Short.

"Can you say when the thunder-bolt will fall? when the tempest is about to burst? where the prairie fire will break forth? he replied.

Short and Noggin seemed perfectly satisfied with his answers. But that was more than I felt, when he replied to the questions put to him as to their numbers.

"Can you count the flakes which fall in early winter? do you know the number of the stars in the blue canopy above our heads? can you reckon the buffaloes as they scamper across the plains in a stampedo?"

Noggin on this got up, and bowing to the old chief who was squatting on his hams by his side, in a most polite way, observed:

"All this rigmarole, which this old redskins here has been telling to us, comes to this, as far as I can make out. He has heard the plot of those thieving, varmint redskins through his wife, or some friend or other. When they will come he does not exactly know, but it will be about the time that the snow begins to melt, and traveling is pretty heavy work, and then they'll come down upon us in no small numbers, enough, I guess, to make us look pretty foolish if we don't keep our powder dry, and our eyes wide awake around us. The question now is, shall we stay here and fight the varmints, or shall we strike tents, and push away over the mountains?"

Various opinions were given on this point. If we remained where we were the redskins would attack us, and though we might beat them off, they would probably surround us, and come again and again till they starved us out, or compelled us to retreat at a disadvantage. The moving our provisions and baggage was our great difficulty. Still, the general opinion was, that it would be better to move on at once. Laban Ragget at last stood up, and gave the casting vote.

"You see, friends," said he, "where there's a will there's a way. That's been my notion through life. Where I've had the will to do, mind you, what ought to be done, I've never failed to find the way. I've fought the redskins often, and I'd fight them again, if need be, with pleasure; but I don't want to expose the women and children to the chances of a battle with them; and so I say we'll move on. We'll put runners to the

wagons, and make snowshoes for ourselves, and by to-morrow evening we'll be ready for a start. Then we'll lie down and rest, and by early dawn we'll be on foot and away. Meantime some of the young men will keep a lookout round the camp, to watch that we are not taken by surprise."

I give Laban's speech entire, because his proposals were carried out to the letter. All agreed; and, literally I do not believe that a minute had passed before everybody was busily engaged in preparing for our departure. Some were making snow-shoes; others runners for the sleighs; others packing our goods and provisions in small light parcels easily carried; the women were as active as the men, and several were cooking and preparing the flesh of the bear we had killed the night before, by making it into pemmican. Mrs. Noggin was very useful in making snow-shoes, and so was the old Indian. His name, by-the-by, was Wabassemmung, or the White Dog, and to prove his title to the name, he would set up a barking, which no one could have supposed was from the voice of a human being. He had only about twenty followers, all the rest of his tribe having been treacherously murdered by the Flintheads, against whom he had now come to warn us. He wore a white mantle, as appropriate to his name, or, probably, he obtained his name from his fancy for wearing a white mantle; at least, one that was white by courtesy, for it had become so smoke-dried and stained, that its original purity was considerably damaged. Our venerable friend assured us, that there was no chance of the Flintheads attacking us that night, and that we might, therefore, sleep in peace, because his own people were on the watch, and would give us timely notice. This was satisfactory, for, after our bear-hunting expedition, I, for one, was very glad to get some rest. Few people have ever slept sounder than I did on that night for a few hours, notwithstanding all the bustle and noise going on in the camp.

By the evening, as Laban had promised, everything was ready for our departure. This night it was judged prudent that scouts should be sent out to watch for an enemy, and

Obed, Elihu, Sam, Noggin, and I, with a few others, were appointed to that duty by Laban. He had been chosen leader and dictator, and we were all bound implicitly to obey him. We scouts, with our rifles in hand, started away together, two and two. Obed was with me. With the snow on the ground, and a clear sky in those regions, it is never dark, and our difficulty, as we advanced, was to conceal ourselves from any lurking foe. Still we worked our way on, taking advantage of every mound, or the tops of trees, or bushes appearing above the white smooth plain. It had been agreed that, as soon as we could see an enemy, we were to retreat at full speed to the camp. If we were discovered; we were to fire off our rifles as a warning to our friends, but if not, we were to reserve our bullets for the bodies of our foes. We each had on light snow-shoes, with which we could walk well enough, but running with such machines is altogether a very different affair to running in a thin pair of pumps. Having proceeded about, as we judged, three miles from the camp, we began to circle around it, for it was just as likely that the cunning redskins would approach from the east or south, as from the north. They, wiser than white men, never commit the fault of despising their enmies, but take every advantage which strategem or treachery can afford them to gain their ends.

Obed and I began to think that at last it must be near dawn, and turned our eyes eastward, in the expectation of seeing the pale red and yellow streaks which usher in the rich glow, the harbinger of the rising sun. That was my idea, not friend Obed's. He remarked, "Daylight will soon be on, I guess, and it is time we were back at camp to get some breakfast, before we begin our trudge over the mountains, for I'm mighty hungry, I calkilate; ain't you, Dick?"

"I agreed with him; but just before we turned our faces campward, I climbed up the south side of a mound, above which I allowed only my head to appear, that I might take a leisurely survey of the country beyond where we then were. Obed followed my example. We gazed through the shades of night for some time.

"I'm main hungry, Dick," said Obed, "let us be going."

Still something kept me there. Just as I was getting up, I thought I saw some dark shadows moving along over the white sheet of snow.

"Look, Obed," said I, "what are those out there?"

His eyes were even sharper generally than mine. "Indjens, redskins," whispered Obed. "It's time that we cut. They're not far off."

We first, before moving, satisfied ourselves that we were not mistaken; there were a dozen or more people, probably the advance guard. We then slipped down from our height, and began striding towards the camp, as fast as our legs and snow-shoes would carry us. It was a satisfaction to feel that there was a high mound between us and the Indians, or our scalps would not have felt comfortable on our heads. We did not turn our eyes to the right hand or the left, but looked straight on, keeping our legs going with a curious movement, between sliding and running, and skating and kicking. It was fatiguing, but we got on rapidly, and we had an idea that our enemies were not advancing nearly so fast. It was a race of life and death. Strange to say, I rather liked the excitement. I always prefer having an object when I walk; now I had got one. We knew that if the Indians crossed our trail, they would instantly find us out and give chase, but then it was a satisfaction to know that they could go no faster than we were going. We had almost got within sight of the camp, when we heard a shout from behind us. I was unwilling to stop and look back, but if I did not stop, and attempted to look over my shoulder, I should very likely, I knew, topple down on my head. On we went again. There was another shout. We could just see the tops of the huts. I turned my head round, and there I saw a dozen or more redskin warriors scampering like mad creatures over the snow, and flourishing their tomahawks. Fast as we were going, they were going faster. Still we might reach the camp before them, but it was necessary to warn our friends. As I ran, I unslung my rifle, not to fire at

them, for that would have been useless, but to discharge it in the air as a signal. I did so, but by some means by this act, I lost my balance, and toppling over, down I came at full length, I tried to rise, but that on soft snow is no easy matter at the speed circumstances demanded; and then, what was my horror to find that I had broken one of my snow-shoes! I gave myself up for lost and entreated Obed to fly and save his life.

"Fly, Dick!" he exclaimed indignantly; "that ain't the way of the Raggets, boy. No; if the redskins want your scalp, they must have mine first, and I'll have a fight for both of them, depend, on't."

While he was saying this, he was helping me to rise, and as one snow-shoe would be worse than useless, I cast them both off, and then did what was the next best thing, loaded my rifle; and turning our faces to our approaching foes, we stood ready to receive them. When they saw us stop, they came on more leisurely. As they got nearer I counted about a dozen of them only. On this my heart began to beat more regularly.

"I say, Dick, my scalp sits pleasanter, like, on my head," observed Obed.

In a short time the Indians got near enough to us to hail. "What are they saying?" I asked of Obed.

"Why, Dick, as far as I can make out, that they are friends," he answered; but you know, these red varmints are so treacherous, that we musn't trust them on no account. They may be old White Dog's friends, or they may be some of the Flint-heads. If they are the last they will scalp us in another minute, or maybe they'll try and get into the camp, and then play us some scurvy trick."

These surmises were not pleasant. Still, we could not hope to cope with twelve well armed Indians, with any chance of success, and we must, therefore, we saw, attempt only pacific measures. In another minute they were up with us. They held out ther hands in a friendly manner, and we observed that their general appearance was very similar to that of old White Dog. In a friendly manner, therefore, we proceeded towards

the camp. When we got near we made signs that we would go and prepare our friends for their reception. They made no objection to this, but, letting us go, squatted down on the snow about two hundred yards from the camp. Immediately after we got in, we told Noggin, who interpreted our report to White Dog.

"Tell him not to show himself," said Laban.

The old chief was, however, far too wide awake to do that. Covering himself up with one of our cloaks, so that even the sharp eyes of an Indian could not discover him, he crept to the north of the hut, and looked through the stockade Noggin accompanied him.

"Flintheads," whispered Noggin. "He says they are not his people. They are up to some deep treachery. They, of course, don't know that old White Dog is here, and that we are warned of their intentions. What is to be done? I wish Short and the rest were here."

Laban, after Noggin had spoken, stood for a minute or two in an attitude of reflection. I believe that if a great gun had been let off at his ear he would not have heard it just then. At length he said:

"Wait till they come, and then we will let the redskins enter the encampment. As they do so we must seize every mother's son of them, and bind them all to the posts of the huts. We won't brain them, as they would have brained us, and maybe the lesson we thus give them will teach them that the religion of the white-faces is a great deal better than that of the redskins.

We eagerly looked out for the return of the other scouts, for we were afraid that they might have been picked off by some prowling bands of Flintheads. Soon after daylight, however, they came in, without having seen any one. Our arrangements were speedily made. The women were to keep out of the way, and to pretend to be nursing the children. As we far outnumbered the Indians, two of us were told off to take charge of one of them, the rest were to act as a party of

reserve to seize any who might escape. The instant they entered the camp they were to be seized, as, seeing us prepared to move, of course their suspicions would be aroused. Noggin, who best knew their ways, undertook to tell them that they might come in.

"The varmints, knowing their own treacherous ways, are so suspicious, that if we show that we are too willing to let them come, they'll fancy, that we've some plot in hand, and will be off to their friends."

The gate of our stockade being opened, Noggin carelessly sauntered out and squatted himself down before the Indians, as if prepared for a regular palaver. Not to lose time, the rest of us got our breakfasts, harnessed the horses, and prepared for an immediate start. I must say I never bolted my food at such a rate as I did that morning. At last Noggin got up, and he and the Indians came towards the stockade. My heart beat in a curious way. We watched Noggin. He looked glum and made no signal that we were to alter our tactics. The Indians all trooped in one after the other, looking sedate and quiet enough, but their dark eyes rolled furtively about, and there was a scowl on their brows which showed that they were not altogether at their ease. We waited for Laban to give the expected signal. It was to be the instant the chief of the party reached him and held out his hand as we knew he would. Slowly a tall athletic warrior, with a very malignant countenance, however, advanced, casting his suspicious glances on every side, till he was close up to Laban. Obed and I were to seize the same man, but I could not help following the leader, and I felt sure that his hand was stealing down towards his tomahawk. Laban must have thought so too. In an instant the tall warrior's weapon was in his hand, and was descending on Laban's head, when a shot from behind a hut struck him on the forehead, and he fell forward dead at our friend's feet. At the same moment we all threw ourselves on his followers, but many of us received some severe cuts in our attempts to secure them, for all of them, prompted by the same

feeling, had grasped their axes, with the intention of fighting their way again out of the camp. We had a severe struggle with them before we had them all secured. Scowling and vindictive glances enough they cast on us when we had them fast. Old White Dog had, we found, saved the life of Laban Raggett by taking that of the chief. Never had a more treacherous plot to murder a whole party been more mercifully counteracted. Still neither the Raggets nor I would consent to kill our captives. Our proposal was simply to deprive them of their arms, and having fed them, to leave them bound, knowing that the rest of the tribe would, before long, visit the spot and release them. This plan, however did not at all suit old White Dog's or Noggin's notions on the matter.

"The treacherous redskin varmints! you don't suppose they'll thank you for letting 'em live?" exclaimed the latter. "They'll be after us, and follow us up like bloodhounds the moment they are free, that they will."

"Never mind, friend Noggin," replied Laban, calmly. "Right is right all the world over. It would be wrong to kill a prisoner, do you see, and so I guess it's right to let these people live. I will stand the consequences of it, let come what may."

Noggin said no more; and now everybody was busily engaged in preparing to start. The sleighs were loaded, the horses were put to, and in a long line we filed out of the fort. All the women walked and carried the children; there were not many of the latter, for it was a rough life we were leading at the best, and not fitted for such delicate beings. Many of the men also had to drag hand sleighs, and, as it was, they were obliged to leave behind them some of the heavier baggage. Old White Dog volunteered to accompany us. He had been looking for the arrival of the small remnant of his tribe, and as they had not appeared he began to fear that they had fallen into the hands of their enemies. When all the party had gone out, and proceeded some hundred yards, Obed and I went back, by the directions of Laban, and put some food within reach of our captive's mouths.

"They won't take a very pleasant meal, but they won't starve," observed Obed, as we left them. Laban, in the meantime, had undertaken to watch the old Indian and Noggin, whom he suspected of an intention of going back and scalping our captives. We, however, watched them so narrowly that they could not accomplish their object. We now pushed on as rapidly as we could towards the mountains, as it was most important that we should gain a secure position at a considerable height before night. At first, where the snow was beaten down, we went on merrily enough, but when the ascent of the mountain really began, it was very heavy work for man and beast. Our horses were not in good condition, as they had had nothing but dry prairie grass and very little corn all the winter, but they were very little animals, all bone and muscle, and had no weight of their own to carry, at all events. As we proceeded, we kept a very bright look-out behind us, both to the north and south, to ascertain that we were not pursued. At length we entered the pass in the mountains for which we had been making, and here our difficulties began. High black cliffs towered above our heads on each side to the height of many hundred feet, while before us were masses of the wildest and most rugged mountains, over and between which lay the path we had to pursue. Short, who had crossed the mountains at this place two or three times, acted as our guide. Frequently one party had to go ahead with spades and clear the way, and we had also often to take out the horses, and drag on one sleigh, and then come back and get the next. We had reason to be thankful that on this occasion we had no enemy to molest us. Old White Dog was very much astonished to see the men work as we did, and hinted that if he had the direction of affairs, he should make the women labor as those of his people are compelled to do, while he sat still in his dignified idleness. He did not gain many friends by his remarks among the gentler sex of our party. A sheltered platform surrounded by rocks on the mountain side, had been described by Short, and fixed on for our resting place. Up, up, up, we worked our

way. At last we reached it, pretty well worn out. I never felt my legs ache so much before. It had not a very inviting aspect when we were there. It had, however, a great advantage, as from its position it might easily be defended, should we be pursued and attacked by the Flintheads. Having driven our sleighs on to it, we set about the business of encamping. As usual we placed the sleighs in a circle, so as to form a breastwork, with the cattle inside it. The side of the mountain was covered with pine trees. We cut down a number of these, at least so much of them as appeared above the snow, and having beaten hard a large circle in the centre of the camp, by walking over it with our snow shoes, we placed them side by side so as to form a large platform. On this we piled up all the branches and logs we could collect dry and green, and set the mass on fire. The platform, it will be understood, served as our hearthstone, and kept the burning embers off the snow Otherwise, they would quickly have burnt out a cavern, into which they would have sunk and disappeared. We required, as may be supposed, a large fire for so numerous a party, and it was a curious sight to watch the different countenances of the travellers, as we sat round it eagerly discussing our evening meal.

We did not neglect the usual precautions to prevent a surprise, and two of the young men at a time took post as sentinels a little way down the mountain, to give timely notice of the approach of a foe. After supper, all the party sang a hymn, led by Laban Ragget, and very sweet and solemn were the notes as they burst through the night air, and echoed among those rocks, never before, too probably, awakened to sounds of praise and thanksgiving.

"It's an old custom of mine," said Laban, to me, "when I cannot expound to my family, or hold forth in prayer as usual. If, Dick, we didn't keep up our religious customs very strictly in the back settlements, we should soon, as many do, become no better than heathens."

As I had been on my legs for the best part of the last two

days and nights, I was excused doing sentry's duty, and no sooner had I wrapped myself in my buffalo robe, with my feet towards the fire, and my head on a pine log, which served me as a pillow, than I was fast asleep. How long I had slept I could not tell (it was, I afterwards found, some hours), when I was awoke by the most unearthly shrieks and cries, which seemed to come directly from under the very spot on which I lay.

CHAPTER XIV.

A sudden alarm—White Dog nearly roasted—Continue our march—My young friends Gog and Magog—Disappearance of Short and Obed—I descend to search for them—A magnificent ice cavern—Cross a frozen lake—Indians ahead—Friends—A scene in the Rocky Mountains—Camp, and fortify ourselves—Approach of Flintheads—Desperate conflict—An avalanche comes thundering down upon us.

I WAS describing how I was fast asleep in our first night's encampment on our winter's journey across the Rocky Mountains, when I was awoke by the most terrific cries, whence proceeding I could not tell. I thought a whole host of the Flintheads were upon us, and, seizing my rifle, sprang to my feet. When I was really awake, however, I found that the sounds came from under the platform, and a large hole near me soon showed what had happened. I had left our friendly old chief, Wabassemmung, or the White Dog, fast asleep there. He had selected it from its being the warmest place and nearest the fire. The consequence was that the snow had there melted more rapidly, and a deep chasm of seven or eight feet having been formed, he had glided into it, and only awoke when he found the hot ashes coming showering down upon his head and burning the tip of his long nose. For once in his astonishment and fright, he forgot his dignity, and shrieked out as heartily as any pale face. Laban and I and Short, who were nearest, stooping down, soon dragged him out of his uncomfortable position, and except that his nose was a little burned, and his feathers were singed, and his cloak was a hue or two darker, he was not much the worse for his adventure. He took it very good-naturedly, and seemed somewhat ashamed of having expressed his terror in the noisy way he had done.

Even before dawn we were on foot, and, having taken our morning meal, harnessed the horses and began our march.

Our great object was to get to a certain elevation, to which we knew the Indians of the plain could never attempt to mount, even for the sake of glutting their revenge on us. We hoped also, should they attempt to follow us, to be better able to defend ourselves in the mountain passes than, from the smallness of our numbers, we could in the more open ground. In the hurry of describing more stirring events, I forgot to mention my two young bears. I did not like to desert them, as I might not have an opportunity of capturing any others.

Laban at first objected to my dragging them along with me; but at length he consented, observing, "Well, you know, Dick, if we get hungry, we'll eat 'em."

Of course I could not but consent to this arrangement. Although the full grown grizzly bear is the most ferocious of the ursine race, these little creatures in a few hours became comparatively tame and contented with their lot. They trotted alongside of me very willingly, and at night lay coiled up together like a ball of wool, to keep each other warm. I gave them a small piece of fat and a little meal porridge, and that was all they seemed to want, besides sucking their paws, which they did as babies do their fists when they are hungry. Poor little things! they seemed to know that they had nobody else but me to look to as their friend. My friends, the Raggets and their companions, were very kind people, but they had a decidedly practical turn, and would have eaten my pets forthwith if I would have let them. I called one Gog and the other Magog, names about which the honest backwoodsmen, who had never heard even of Guildhall, knew nothing. In appearance there was very little difference between them, but there was a considerable amount in their characters. Gog became much sooner tame, and was of a more affectionate, gentle, and peaceable disposition. Magog would sit and growl over anything given him to play with, and run off with it away from his brother, while Gog would frisk about and seem to take pleasure in getting the other to join in his sports. Of course Gog became the favorite with all hands, and even the children were

not afraid of playing with him, whereas Magog would snap at them, and very often tumbled them over and hurt them.

"I say, Dick," said Obed to me, "if we want food, we'll eat that Magog of yours up first."

That is what Magog got for his surliness and ill-temper.

We continued to push on over the mountain range. It was not all ascent. Sometimes we came to a level on a wide open space where there was not much snow, and then we got on rapidly. Our only passage through one part of the route was up the bed of a torrent, frozen hard and covered with snow. It was very heavy work, but Short assured us that it would not last long, so we pushed on.

Obed, Short, and I, with others, were clearing the way with our spades, when suddenly, without the slightert warning, the two first, who were ahead of me went right through the ice and disappeared. Horror almost overcame me, for I knew that the torrent would have the power of sweeping them down in an instant far out of our sight. Obed was my greatest friend. Short's loss to all the party was irreparable. The three other men with me and I shouted to our friends, several of whom had long poles to assist their progress, to hasten to our aid. Fastening four of these together, two and two, I secured a rope round my body, which the others held, and then worked myself forward till I was over the hole. Another rope was made fast to the poles; by this I descended. I was surprised to find the chasm so deep, for I thought I should see the water rushing down a little below the surface. Instead of that there was below the hole a hard very nearly smooth floor. I lowered myself gently, and found it perfectly firm and strong; but, alas! neither Obed nor Short were to be seen. Under other circumstances I should have been delighted with the appearance of the place in which I found myself. It was like a magnificent cavern of the purest white marble, ornamented with glass stalactites of the most brilliant rainbow hues. I should call it rather a gallery, because it extended up and down to an indefinite distance. No work of art could be more light and graceful.

But my thoughts were with my friends, and all the beauty which surrounded me seemed only to mock my anxiety for their fate. I heard those above, Laban Ragget and his sons, asking eagerly if I had found them, and I had to answer mournfully "No." Still I saw that they could not have gone through the ice into the stream itself, for that everywhere appeared unbroken. Then it struck me that, as the floor was an inclined plane, they had probably slipped down over the smooth surface without meeting anything to stop them. This was a solution of the problem of the cause of their disappearance, but it did not relieve my anxiety as to their fate. I sung out to my friends above to lengthen the rope as far as they could, for I had no inclination to proceed without it, and slid down to as great a distance as its length would allow me to move. I shouted and shouted, but there was no answer. I began truly to despair. "Poor fellows, they must be gone," I thought. "It will be a sad report I must take Laban."

I began to ascend to get under the hole again. I found that I could easily crawl up the incline on hands and knees. I turned to rest for an instant, and thought that I would give one shout more. There was a roaring rumbling noise of the water underneath, which made it necessary to sing out very sharply to be heard at any distance. I therefore shrieked out this time at the very top of my voice.

A few instants passed while the echoes died away, and then a faint cry came up from far, far down the ice gallery. It was repeated. There could be no doubt that it was from my friends. I waited to consider whether I should return and get others to come down with more ropes, so that should Short and Obed have fallen into an ice-pit, we might help them out; or whether it was best to wait and see if they were working their own way up, as I found from experience they might be able to do. It was while thus waiting for them that I was able to admire the beauty of the scene. The floor was dark blue, the sides were white, and the ceiling was of every variety of green and red and yellow, and in some places so transparent that it seemed

surprising that any person, much less a horse and sleigh, could have passed over it without breaking through; then there were in the distance arches and columns and whole buildings and statutes of every grotesque form imaginable, at least so my imagination carved out the excresences and masses of ice I saw piled up in a long vista before me. I did not stay long without shouting again, and once more the voices of my friends assured me that they were drawing near. My heart was now much lighter, and at length I caught sight of their heads as they crawled up like two four-footed creatures in the distance. I was truly glad when they got up to me; they had been, they owned, not slightly alarmed, and were, they showed, very tired and out of breath.

On breaking through the ice, the impetus they got sent them sliding down the sloping floor at so great a rate that they could not stop themselves. On, they went, not knowing when their journey would end; but dreading that it might be into some deep hole, or perhaps the torrent itself. They were well pleased, therefore, when they brought up suddenly against a mass of rock which rose out of the bed of the stream; and doubly grateful were they, when, on looking beyond it, saw that on the other side there was a deep fall through which the water itself was forcing its way.

We were all soon dragged up again to the surface, and though I had described the magnificence of the icy gallery, no one seemed inclined to pay it a visit. We had now to drag our sleighs up a steep bank, and to proceed with the greatest caution, our progress being very slow. At last we once more got on level ground, and soon reached a long narrow lake, out of which the torrent descended. This accounted for there being water under the ice. Many of the torrents we came to were frozen completely through.

It may seem in theory very pleasant work walking in snow-shoes over the smooth surface of the snow, often high up among the boughs of trees, and level with the roofs of cottages; but when a person is not accustomed to the proceeding, it become painful in the extreme.

Snow-shoes are frames of light wood from four to six feet long, pointed at both ends like a boat. The intermediate space is filled up with network. They are secured to the feet by leathern thongs, and there is a hole in which the heel works. From their shape and size they present a very wide surface to the snow, and prevent the walker from sinking in.

Great care is required in fastening the thongs, which must be tight; if they are too tight, when they get wet, as they frequently do, and shrink, they cut into the ankles and cause serious injury. Often the feet are so benumbed with the cold that at the time, no pain is felt, and it is only when the sufferer comes to take off his shoes, that he finds that the thongs have disappeared in a mass of swelling. We had no fears as to the ice on the lake bearing us, so we merrily slid on to it, and proceeded faster than we had done since we left the camp. The horses especially seemed to enjoy the ease with which they dragged on the loads which had before seemed so heavy, while the rest of us, taking off our snow shoes, glided over the smooth surface as rapidly as they did. Fortunately but little snow had fallen in this region, and the wind had blown it off the ice. This was the first, and indeed only advantage we gained by travelling before the frost broke up. Had we not begun our journey as we were now doing, we should have had to wait several weeks longer, till the snow had melted from the mountain tops, and the streams subsided to their usual level. Still we could not conceal from ourselves that we had many dangers to encounter, even should we not be pursued and attacked by the redskins.

I was generally in the van with Obed and Short and my two bears. I did not venture to let the Master Bruins go loose, but yoked them together, and had a rope fastened to them besides. Thus united they waddled on; not lovingly, for very often they grumbled and growled, and seemed to be making far from pleasant remarks to each other. They kept on all fours, it must be understood. Bears only stand on their hind legs when they have learned to dance, or are going to eat a man, or at all

events are standing at bay. On reaching the end of the lake we found that a considerable portion of the day had been spent, but still we had some distance to go before we could reach the spot proposed for our camping ground. However, it was thought advisable to push on. I suggested to Short that it might have been better for us to camp on the shore of the lake.

"So it would, Dick, if we hadn't to guard against those cunning redskins. But old White Dog has heard, and I believe he is right, that there is another path over the mountains, which leads to the very spot near where we propose camping; at least a little to this side of it. Now, if our enemies know of this, and it's not likely that they'll be ignorant, and they make chase after us, some of the cunning varmints will take that path to cut us off, depend on't. We havn't told the women of it, nor the men generally, because there's no use making them anxious till the time comes; and then there's no fear but that they'll all behave as they ought."

I could not but admire the calm self-possession of my friends, who, in expectation of so fearful an event, could show so little concern, and at the same time place such implicit confidence in the nerve and courage of their companions. I must own that I felt very anxious, and carefully examined the lock of my rifle, and assured myself that I had properly loaded it. Soon after this we entered a broad defile with high broken rocks on either side us, beyond which towered up to the sky the white masses of the mountain tops. The defile as we advanced gradually narrowed, till I found that we were approaching a narrow gorge with cliffs rising on each side almost perpendicular above it. Just then I thought that I saw something moving among the rocks before us. I asked Short. His quick eye had detected the movement.

"Indjens," he exclaimed. "Oh! the treacherous varmints."

Scarcely had he uttered the word than from behind the rocks in our front up sprang a numerous band of Indians in war-paint and feathers, uttering the most terrific shrieks and

cries, and dancing and leaping about in the most extraordinary manner. Our rifles were in a moment in our hands. I was on the point of firing at an Indian whom I had covered, when old White Dog rushed to the front, exclaiming what Short interpreted to mean, "Don't fire; they are friends, my people."

This was satisfactory information, for, however pleasant fighting might be to some people, in our case it would not bring either honor or plunder. The fact was that, posted as they were, they might, had they been enemies, have picked us off, supposing that they had rifles, without our being able in any way to get at them, except by climbing up the rocks, when of course they would have picked us off in detail. After White Dog's followers had amused themselves sufficiently with dancing and shrieking, they came down from their position, and paid their respects to their chief, who inquired how it was they happened to be where we had found them. They all seemed to be very eager to tell him, but he selected one as the spokesman, and told him to narrate what had occurred. It appeared that after their chief had left them they got notice that the Flintheads proposed to attack their lodges and destroy them To avoid this result they had packed up their goods and fled from the spot, merely leaving some scouts to watch the proceedings of their enemies. They had not long to wait before they observed a party of warriors approaching. This party seemed very much disappointed at finding their lodges deserted. Having set fire to everything that would burn, they continued their route towards our camp, followed closely by the scouts. when these saw them enter within the entrenchments, they instantly set off back to their companions. A council was then held, when it was agreed that it was their duty to set off and help their chief, who might be in danger.

Old White Dog had, I found, left directions outside our camp which they would clearly understand, telling them to follow him. On reaching the camp they found that we had deserted it, but before going on they naturally took a glance round inside. There they found the unfortunate Flintheads whom we had left bound.

"I hope, Short," said I, "that they respected our intentions, and left them there unhurt."

"They left them there, you may be sure, Dick," answered Sam, quietly. "But you may be equally sure that they cut the throats of every mother's son of them,"

"Cruel, murderous wretches!" I exclaimed.

"It's their way of doing things," said Sam. "As they are taught in their youth, so they act now they have grown up. If you had been taught to scalp your enemies when you were a boy, you'd do the same with pleasure now, whenever you had a chance!"

I could not deny that this would too probably have been the case, and therefore made no farther remarks on the subject, only feeling thankful that I had been born in a Christian land, and brought up with Christian principles.

The meeting with these Indians caused another short delay, and they and their wives, and children, and dogs, falling in the rear of our party, we all proceeded together. The women and children I ought to have said, had been hid away among the rocks, and were only produced at the last moment, as we were moving on. We could not object to White Dog's tribe accompanying us, but as they came but scantily furnished with provisions we were under some considerable apprehension that they would create a famine in our camp.

A strong party of us, consisting of Short and Noggin, and some of the Raggets, with myself and old White Dog and several of his tribe. now pushed on to occupy the pass which led into the one through which we were travelling. We soon reached it, and climbing up the surrounding heights, looked around. As far as the eye could range, not a moving obstacle was visible; all was silent and solitary, We had purposely concealed ourselves in case an enemy should be approaching, and as I stood on that mountain height looking out into the distance over interminable snow-covered ranges of rock, I was more sensible than I had ever before been of the sensation of solitude; never before had I remarked silence so perfect. Truly it seemed as

if nature was sound asleep. So she was; it was the sleep of winter.

In England, where birds are constantly flying about, and often insects humming, even at Christmas, we have no conception of the utter want of all appearance of life in the mountain regions in which I was now traveling. We waited on the watch till the main body of our party came up, and then, seeing no enemies, pushed on to our camping-ground. I must say that I was very glad to get there without meeting with the Flintheads. I felt sure that as soon as they found out the fate of their friends, they would track us, and, if they could, not leave one of our party alive. Probably Laban, as well as the others, thought the same, but wisely kept their thoughts to themselves.

We fortified ourselves as usual, and kept a strict watch during the night. The weather was much less cold than it had been; indeed, there were evident signs of the coming spring, and it became more than ever evident that we must push on before the frozen-up torrents should again burst forth, and render many spots impassable. After a hurried breakfast, we were once more on our way; we marched in true military order, with an advanced and a rear guard; the first carried spades, and acted as a pioneer corps. This morning I was in the rear guard, with Obed and Short, and all the Indians with their old chief. We had marched about a mile, and had just entered one of the defiles I have spoken of, with lofty cliffs on each side, and the mountains rising, it seemed, sheer up above our heads for thousands of feet, when I saw the Indians prick up their ears; then they stopped and bent down to the ground as if to listen. There was a great talking among them, and old White Dog called to Short; and Short announced to us the unpleasant information that we were pursued by a large body of Flintheads. They could not have overtaken our party in a position more advantageous to us; for, from the narrowness of the pass, even should they be very superior in numbers, we could show as good a front as they could. While our main

body moved on with the women and children and goods, I and about a dozen young men remained with the Indians to defend the pass, and to drive back, if we possibly could, our enemies.

"There's one thing we may look for," observed Sam Short; "they'll fight to the last gasp, rather than to lose the chance of revenge; only don't let any of us get into their hands alive, that's all; they'd try our nerves in a way we should not like, depend on that."

Every man among us looked to his rifle, and felt that his hunting-knife was ready to his hand in his belt. We advanced a little further, and then halted at a spot where it seemed impossible that the Indians could scale the heights to get at us. We had not long to wait. Suddenly before us appeared a band of Indians just turning an angle of the pass. On they came at a rapid pace till the whole road, as far as the eye could reach, seemed full of them. As soon as they perceived us, they set up the most terrific yells, and rushed frantically forward. We waited for them steadily, but I feared, by the very force of their charge, that our people would be overthrown and driven back.

"Now lads," exclaimed Laban, as they came on, "be steady. Wait till I give the word. Fire low. Don't let the bullets fly over their heads. Bring down the leading men. Now ready—Fire!"

All obeyed our brave leader, and several in the front ranks of the enemy fell. Yet it did not stop the rest, but rushing on with the fiercest shrieks, they threw themselves madly upon our party. The White Dog's followers bore the brunt of the charge, and very gallantly did they behave. Again and again the Flintheads were driven back, and again and again they came on. They seemed resolved to conquer or die. There must have been nearly a hundred warriors among them. The air was at times darkened with their arrows, besides which a number had rifles. Four or five of our Indian allies had been killed, as had one of our people, and numbers had been wound-

ed. We kept up at them a hot fire all the time, and many of them fell. Still, in proportion to our numbers, we had lost more men than they had. Once more the whole column rushed on together. I fully thought that we were lost, when as I glanced my eye upward, I saw what I fancied was the mountain-top bend forward. Yes, I was not mistaken! Down it came with a wild rushing noise directly towards us, shaking the very ground on which we stood. The Indians saw it too, but it did not stop them, as with headlong speed they were rushing towards us, about to make another onslaught. They and White Dog's people met, and the last I saw of them they were dashing their tomahawks into each other's brains.

I shouted frantically to Laban and the rest to retreat. It was a mighty avalanche, a vast mass of snow and ice. As it descended it increased in size, gathering fresh speed. As one mast of a ship drags another in its fall, so did one mountain-top seem to lay hold of the one next to it, and bring it downwards into the valley. Down, down came the mountains of snow, thundering, roaring, rushing. My brain seemed to partake of the wild commotion. I cannot attempt to describe the effect. I was leaping, running, springing back from the enemy, with every muscle exerted to the utmost, in the direction the women and baggage had gone. Laban and his sons were near me, I believed, but already dense showers of snow, or rather solid masses, the *avant-coureurs* of the avalanche, were falling down on us and preventing me seeing anything many feet from where I was. Unearthly shrieks and cries of terror and despair reached my ears; a mass of snow struck me, and brought me to the ground deprived of consciousness.

CHAPTER XV.

I find myself under the snow—My attempts to escape appear to be vain—Struggle on—Am free, but find myself alone among the mountains—Push on—Encounter a grizzly bear—A fight—Will he eat me, or shall I eat him?—The pleasantest alternative occurs, and Bruin saves my life—I hurry on in the hopes of overtaking my friends—Take up my lodging for the night in a cavern.

WHEN I saw the avalanche come thundering down towards me, although I used my utmost exertions to escape, I in reality had completely given myself up for lost. My feelings were very bitter, but they were of short duration, when I was brought stunned to the ground. I came to myself at last. or I should not be writing this; but where I was or what had occurred, it was some time before I could recollect. At last a dim consciousness came over me that something terrible had happened, and I opened my eyes and looked about; I was under the snow, or rather under a mass of ice in a space ten or twelve feet long, and about three high, being rather wider at the base. This was a very respectable sized tomb, and such I feared it would prove to me, unless I could work my way out of it. Of course I knew that I might be released when the snow melted, but I should inevitably be starved long before that event could take place, not to speak of dying of chill, and damp, and rheumatism. My principle has always been never to say die; if it had been otherwise I should not be again in Old England. My rifle lay on the ground close to me where I had fallen; my hand still grasped the long pike I always carried, and the ever constant weapon of the backwoodsman, my hatchet was in my belt. I crawled along to one end of the icy cavern, tapping the roof to ascertain if there was any crack through which I might work my way, but it was one

solid sheet of ice; the end was blocked up also by a solid mass through which, after making several attempts, I found it impossible to bore. Finding all my efforts useless at this end, I went to the other. Appearances were not promising; still I would not allow myself to believe that by some means or other I might not work my way out of my icy prison. Not a moment was to be lost; my friends might go away and suppose I had perished, or I might be starved or exhausted before I could reach the open air. It was a great thing having a little space to start from, though it was little enough. I set to work at once, therefore, with my axe, and began chopping away at the ice. My idea was to cut myself out a circular shaft, and thus, like a mole, work my way up. I chopped and chopped away, and when I had cut a couple of feet out of the mass, I carried the chips to the further end of the cave; my object in doing this was to obtain sufficient air to breathe, for I found that I very soon consumed what there was in the cave, and that the heat of my body had already begun to melt the ice above me. I suffered, therefore, rather from heat than from cold; I went on chopping till I had space enough in which to stand upright. This was a very great advantage; I felt most encouraged, and could now work with far greater ease than at first, when I had to be on my back, and to chop away above me. I felt very thankful that I was not a miner, either in a coal, iron, or lead mine. Sometimes as I was working away I fancied that I heard the voices of my friends calling to me, but when I stopped there was again a perfect silence. On I went again, but still it appeared as if I was as far as ever from getting out of my prison. I had now cut my shaft as high as I could reach, so I had to make steps in the walls on which I could stand while I worked upwards. This I did till I had got up a dozen feet or more. It showed me the great thickness of the block of ice which had fallen above me, and how mercifully I had been preserved, for had it come upon me, it would have crushed me as thin as a pancake. I was now exposed to a new danger; should I fall as I was tunnelling away, I should break my legs

I already had removed, as I said, a considerable portion of the ice I had cut out to the other end of the cavern. I now saw that it would be better not to remove any more; so, securing my rifle at my back, and taking my pike in my left hand, which indeed I found very useful in keeping me firm, I determined not again to descend, but to continue working upwards as long as I had strength left. To decrease the risk of falling down, I contracted the diameter of my shaft, and thus got along faster. At length, as I gave a blow above my head, what was my satisfaction to feel that my axe had entered a mass of snow. Ask an engineer if he would rather bore under a river with a rocky, or a sandy and muddy bed, and he will tell you that the rock he can manage, but that the sand or mud is very likely to baffle him. So I found with regard to the snow; I got on rapidly through the ice, but as I worked up through the snow, I had reason to dread every instant that the superincumbent mass would fall in and smother me. I found that I made the most progress by scraping it down and beating it hard under my feet, forming a rude stair as I went on. I got up ten feet or so through it, when either my foot had slipped, or a mass of snow had come down upon me, I could not then tell; but I know, to my horror, that I felt myself cent toppling down, heels over head, as I feared, to the bottom of the shaft. I began to give myself up for lost, and would have shrieked out; perhaps I did so, in very grief and disappointment more than through actual fear, when I found that I was brought up by my pike, which had become fixed across the shaft. I held on for some time till the snow had ceased sliding down below me, and then I looked up, and there to my delight I saw, far above me, through a narrow aperture, the clear blue sky. I now could have shouted for joy; but my emancipation was not yet complete, the smooth side of the funnel was to be scaled.

Having secured my pike I set about it. I tried to run up and gain the height by a dash. That would not do, I quickly found, for the snow slid down with my feet as fast as I could lift them, and that made still more come sliding towards me.

The only way to gain the top was by slow and patient progress, I discovered, after many experiments. I therefore carefully made step above step, beating each one down hard as I progressed, and with infinite satisfaction I found that I was again making an upward progress. At last my perseverance was rewarded with success, and I found myself standing on a vast mass of snow, which blocked up the whole of the valley for a considerable distance on the eastern side and for some way on the west, so far, indeed, that my first delight at my own deliverance was very much damped by the fears which seized me for the safety of my friends and companions. There I stood, in the most silent and complete solitude, amid a heaving ocean, as it were, of snow, with the dark granite peaks rising up here and there out of it, and increasing the appearance of bleakness and desolation which reigned around. I shouted again and again, in the hopes that possibly some of my companions might be within hearing; but my voice sounded faint, and indeed, almost inaudible, it seemed, while no echoes reached me from the surrounding rocks. I did not, however, waste much time in hallooing, for instant action was what was required. I felt very hungry, and that fact made me suppose that I must have been some time in my icy cavern before I returned to a state of consciousness. I took out my watch; it had stopped. It was early in the morning when the Indians had attacked us. The sun had not now risen any considerable height in the eastern sky. This made me feel sure that one whole day, if not more, had passed, since the catastrophe, and that if I would preserve my life I must push on to overtake the travellers. I had left my snow-shoes in the camp, so that I had great difficulty often in making my way over the snow in some of the spots where it lay most loosely. More than once I sank up to my shoulders, and had it not been for my pike I should have had great difficulty in scrambling out again. I had got on some way, and was congratulating myself on having got over the worst of it, when I felt the snow giving way under my feet. I tried to spring forward, but that only made me sink

down faster; down, down, I went in a huge drift. I had sunk to middle; then the snowy mass rose to my shoulders, and, to my horror, I found it closing over my head. Though I knew if I went lower I might struggle on for some time, yet that death would be equally certain in the end. My feelings were painful in the extreme. I could not get my pole across above me, but I succeeded in shoving it down below my feet, and to my infinite relief, after I had made several plunges, it struck the point of a rock, or a piece of ice. I kept it fixed there with all the strength I could command, and pressing myself upwards got sufficiently high to throw my self flat on the snow and to scramble forward. This I did for some distance, holding my staff with both hands before me. It was not a pleasant way of making progress, but it was the only safe one. At length I got into the main pass, where the snow lay at its usual depth, and where it was beaten down by the passage of men and wagons and horses. This gave me renewed spirits, though on examining the traces, I discovered that they were at least a day old, perhaps older. My chief immediate wish was to have something to stop the cravings of hunger. I felt in my pockets. I had not a particle of food; nor had I a scrap of tobacco, which might have answered the purpose for a short time. I tried chewing a lump of snow—that was cold comfort; so all I could do was to put my best foot forward, and to try and overtake my friends as soon as possible. I might have walked on for three or four hours engaged in the somewhat difficult endeavor to forget how hungry I was, and to occupy my mind with pleasing fancies (I suspect few people would have succeeded under the circumstances better than I did), when I heard a loud growl, and on looking round to my right, I saw, sitting at the mouth of a cavern formed in a rock in a side valley of the main pass along wich I was travelling, a huge grizzly bear. There he sat, rubbing his nose with his paws, putting me very much in mind of pictures I have seen of hermits of old counting their beads; nor was he, I suspect, much less profitably employed.

I stopped the moment I heard him growl, and looked firmly at the grizzly. I knew that it would not do to turn and run. Had I done so, he would have been after me in an instant, and made mincemeat of my carcass. I do not know what he thought of me; I do know that I thought him a very ugly customer. I bethought me of my rifle. The last shot I had fired had been at the redskis; I had not since loaded. I dreaded lest, before I could do so, he might commence his attack, which I guessed he was meditating. He had probably only just roused up from his winter nap, and was rubbing his eyes and snout as a person does, on waking out of sleep, to recover his senses, and consider what he should do. To this circumstance I owed, I suspected, my present freedom from attack. I, meantime, loaded my rifle as fast as I could, and felt much lighter of heart when I once more lifted it ready for use to my shoulder, with a good ounce of lead in the barrel. "Now, Master Grizzly," said I to myself, "come on, I am ready for you." Bruin, however, was either not quite awake, or wished to consider the best means of making a prise of me. The truth was that both of us were hungry. He wanted to eat me, and I wanted to eat him; that is to say, I determined to do so if I could, should he attack me. If he left me unmolested to pursue my journey—I felt that discretion would be in this instance the best part of valor—that it would be wisest to leave him alone in his glory; for a grizzly, as all hunters know, even with a rifle bullet in his ribs is a very awkward antagonist. He was so long rubbing his nose, that I at last lost patience, and began to move on. I had not taken a dozen steps when his warning growl again reached my ears. I stopped and he went on rubbing his nose as before. "This is all nonsense, old fellow," I exclaimed. "Growl as much as you like. I am not going to wait for you any longer," So, putting my best foot forward, as I had need of doing, I stepped quickly out. I very naturally could not help turning my head over my shoulder, to see what Bruin was doing, and, as I did so, a growl louder than the previous one reached my ear, and I saw him moving on at

a swinging trot after me. This I knew meant mischief. Flight was totally out of the question. I must fight the battle like a man. It must be literally victory or death.

Strange as it may seem, my heart felt more buoyant when I had made up my mind for the struggle, independent of certain anticipations of the pleasure I should derive from the bear steaks I had in contemplation, should I be successful. I speak, perhaps, too lightly of the matter now, because I do not want to make more of my deeds than they deserve; but it was in reality very serious work, and I have cause to be deeply thankful that I did not become the victim of that savage beast. Let this be remembered, that I was then and am now, even more so, most grateful; yet not grateful enough; that I also feel for the merciful way in which I was brought through all the perils to which I was exposed. This being clearly understood, I shall consider myself exonerated from the frequent introduction of expressions to show that I was not a heartless, careless mortal, without a sense of the superintending providence of a most merciful Creator. I do feel and have always felt, that there is no civilized being so odious among all the races of man as a person of that description.

Well, on came the huge bear. I knelt down and took my pike, as a rest for my rifle. This was a great advantage. Growling and gnashing his teeth, the savage monster advanced. I prayed that my arm might be nerved, that my hand might not tremble, and that my rifle might not miss fire. Thus I waited till the brute got within six yards of me. Had I let him got nearer, even in his death struggles, he might have grappled me. I aimed at his eye. I fired, and the moment I had done so sprang back, and did not stop until I had placed twenty paces between myself and the bear, scarcely looking to see the effect of my shot. When the smoke cleared off, I saw the monster struggling on, with the aim, it seemed, of catching me. I was thankful that I had been impelled to spring back as I had done, for I certainly had not previously intended doing so. I knew how hard the old grizzlies often die, and so

I put some dozen or more yards between me and him. He fell, then got up once, and made towards me again, and then rolled over, and I had great hope that life was extinct. I had meantime reloaded my rifle, and approached him with due caution, for bears are, I had heard, cunning fellows, and sometimes sham death to catch the unwary hunter. When I got near enough I poked at him with my pike, and tickled him in several places, and as he did not move, I got round to his head, and gave him a blow with my axe, which would have settled him had he been shamming ever so cleverly.

Without loss of time I cut out his tongue and as many steaks as I could conveniently carry, and stringing them together with a piece of his hide threw them over my back, and hurried on till I could find a sufficient collection of wood or lichens, or other substances that would burn, to make a fire for cooking them. I need not dwell on what I did do, but the fact was I was ravenously hungry; and let any one, with the gnawings of the stomach I was enduring, find his nose within a few inches of some fresh wholesome bear's meat, and he will probably do what I did—eat a piece of it raw. I was very glad that I did, for I felt my strength much recruited by my savage meal, especially as I only ate a small piece, very leisurely chewing it as I hurried on my road.

It was a satisfaction to believe that I was going much faster than the women and vehicles could progress, and so I hoped to overtake them in a day or two at farthest; still, as long as there was daylight, I did not like to stop, and so on I tramped, till just before it grew dark I reached a broader part of the pass, where, in a nook in the mountain side, I discovered the remains of the camp formed by my friends, and left, I had little doubt, that very morning. There was wood enough about, with a little more, which I set to work to collect, to keep a fire burning all night. While thus engaged I found in the side of the rock a cave of good depth. I explored it at once, while there was light, to ascertain that it was not the abode of another grizzly. Having assured myself that the lodgings were

unoccupied, though no signboard announced that they were to be let, I piled my wood up in front, and collected all the branches of fir trees and moss which I could find, to form a bed for myself inside, These arrangements being made, I lighted my fire and sat down with considerable appetite to cook and eat my bear steaks. My adventures for the night were not over.

CHAPTER XVI.

A night in a cave—I fortify myself, and go to sleep—Unwelcome visitors—My battle with the wolves—I drive them off, and again go to sleep—Continue my journey—Night again overtakes me—I build a castle for my resting place—Voices of my friends sound pleasantly—Escape of my companions—Fate of surly Magog—Reach the camp—The summit of the pass—Commence our descent—An Irishman's notion of the best way to go down the mountain.

I SOON got up a good fire, which threw its ruddy glare on all the rough points and salient angles of the cavern, but cast the hollows and recesses into the deepest shade. I glanced my eyes round, however, on every side, and having satisfied myself that it had no previous occupant in the shape of a grizzly and her hopeful family, I proceeded with my culinary operations. Having skewered a supply of bits of bear's flesh sufficient to satisfy my appetite, on as many thin willow twigs, I cut out a number of forked sticks and stuck them round the fire. On these, spit fashion, I placed my skewers, and turned them round and round till they were roasted on every side. A few, to satisfy the immediate cravings of my appetite, I placed very close to the fire, but they got rather more burnt than a French *chef* would have admired. After that, as I had nothing else to do, I could afford to take my time, and to cook them to perfection. I should have liked to have had a little pepper and salt to eat with them, and something more comfortable than melted snow to wash them down. I could not afford to expend my gunpowder, otherwise the nitre in it affords a certain amount of flavor, counterbalanced, to be sure, in the opinion of some people, by the sulphur and charcoal. I don't think, however, anyone need fear being blown up by partaking of

such a condiment. After I had finished my supper, I sang a little to amuse myself and any bats which might have been hanging on by their claws to the roof of the inner part of the cave, and then, having no book to read or anything else to do, I prepared my bed and made up my fire for the night. In other words, I collected a bundle of sticks and fastened them together to form a pillow and scraped into a heap all the dry earth I could find to make myself a mattress. This a back-woodsman would have considered great effeminacy; and though I always adopted their ways when with them, I must own that, when left to myself, I could not help indulging in some approximation as I have described to the luxurious habits of my college life. It was pleasant to recall my arm-chair and slippers, my cheery coal fire, my table covered with books, and a cup of coffee, or perhaps a bottle of port and a plate of biscuits, to apply to in case, after my mental exertions, my physical being should require some slight renovation. Some lazy fellows might rather think that I had not changed for the better. I was on the point of stretching myself on the aforesaid luxurious couch, when I bethought me that it would be more prudent to erect a barrier of some kind between my dormitory and the entrance of the cavern, that, should an uninvited visitor intrude, I might have time for taking measures to protect myself. It by the way also occurred to me that a wall might guard me from the cold wind which blew in at the mouth of the cavern. I, therefore, shaking off my drowsiness by an impulse I can scarcely now account for, built a wall of all the stones and earth and bits of wood I could heap together, nearly two feet high, reaching from the fire to one side of the cavern. I then carefully examined my rifle, and placing it by my side, lay down alongside my wall with my feet towards the fire. Why I did this, I repeat. I cannot say. The idea that such a precaution might be necessary had not till that very moment crossed my mind. The additional exertion somewhat wearied me, and not a minute after I placed my head on the pillow, and like a hen had worked myself a hole to fit my body

in the sand, I was fast asleep. I don't know what occurred after that, till I awoke by finding my feet very cold, which was no wonder, for the fire had almost gone out, and the thermometer was down to zero. I lifted myself up on my elbow while I was recovering my senses after my sleep, when not five paces on the other side of the wall I saw what looked like at least a dozen sparks of light in a row, reaching across the mouth of the cave, while further off appeared several other small fiery orbs. I looked and looked again.

"Fireflies," said I to myself, half dreaming. "Bosh! fireflies in midwinter on the top of a mountain!" I rubbed my eyes. "Sparks from my fire!" Several peculiar low snarling growls made me start up, wide awake with a vengeance. "Wolves!" I said to myself; "There is no doubt about it." The brutes had smelt me out, and with their usual caution, they were making this advance to commence an attack.

How many there were I could not tell, but there must have been a pack of them—parents and children, the biggest and fiercest as usual in the van. I concluded that they had not yet seen me in the dark, but I knew they would find me out as soon as I moved. I felt quietly for my rifle, and got that ready to fire when it was required. Then I lay watching the brutes as slowly they crept on, one foot before the other, just as a pointer advances towards where the covey lies hid. In another instant they might spring upon me. It struck me that they probably did not like the embers of the fire, so I took my long pole, and beat or stirred up the ashes with it, making them send forth showers of sparks. I fancied that the wolves were retreating, so I jumped up, and threw the bundle of sticks which had served me for a pillow, as well as all others on which I could lay my hands, upon the ashes. This act exposed me to the view of the hungry brutes, who instantly, with loud growls rushed back towards me. Just then the dry sticks, aided by a puff of wind, ignited, and blazing up exhibited the whole savage troop to me. It was a highly picturesque scene I doubt not, the fire blazing up, and the dark

rugged walls of the cavern, and my figure brought into strong light, with my gleaming brand pointed towards my savage assailants; but I don't mean to say that I thought about that just then. All I saw were the fierce glaring eyes, the shaggy coats and the hungry-looking fangs of the brutes, as they licked their jaws in anticipation of the feast they hoped to enjoy off me. I did not, however, like to throw away a shot among them, which could only have killed one, so I waited to see what they would do. In my late combat with the bear, I had the anticipation of a meal off my foe, should I prove the victor, but on this occasion I had not that excitement to exertion, for a man must be very hard up for food who could complacently dine off the flesh of a gaunt wolf at the end of winter; and even the cubs, though probably not quite such tough morsels as their parents, had already far too much muscular development to afford satisfactory employment to the jaws. Though, however, I did not want to eat the wolves, they wanted to eat me, which was quite sufficient reason to make me excessively anxious to gain the victory.

After baying at me for some time, the brutes in the front line once more stealthily advanced, followed by those in the rear, whose forms appeared less and less distinct, till all I could make out of them were their fierce eyes, glaring like hot coals through the darkness. By this time a good portion of the sticks had caught fire. As the wolves got nearer, the scent of the remainder of the bear steaks, which I had put aside for my breakfast, filled their nostrils; their eagerness increased, and, with a loud howl, they in a body sprang towards me. I must conquer gloriously, or die and be eaten ignominously; so, seizing a bundle of the burning sticks, I threw them in among the advancing ranks, and then, with loud shouts, grasping my pole, sprang on towards my foes, and belabored them with might and main about their heads. They snarled and bit fiercely at the pole, but did not advance. Still they would not take to flight, and as it was very evident I should have a disturbed night's rest if they remained in the neighborhood, I

was very anxious to make them decamp. I got together, therefore, an additional supply of burning sticks. These I put in readiness for use. Then I levelled my rifle at one of the foremost and biggest wolves; and knocking him over, brandished my pole in one hand, and hurling the burning sticks among them with the other, I made a second furious onslaught on the rest. With unearthly howls and cries away they fled, leaping and scrambling over each other like a flock of sheep, and in complacent triumph I returned to my sandy couch, expecting to enjoy a quiet and comfortable night's rest. A heap of stones served me now for a pillow. Some of my readers may say, if you had had a downy couch or a feather-stuffed pillow, in a nice room with curtains, and a good fire, you might have had some reason for your hopes; but let me assure them that our ideas of comfort arise from comparison. The first night I slept in a feather bed after my camp life I caught the worst cold I ever had. Well, leaving the dead body of the wolf where he had fallen, I took the precaution of making up the fire with the remaining sticks I had collected, and lay down once more to enjoy the sweets of repose. Can it be believed! I had not been ten minutes wrapped in the arms of Morpheus, when I was again roused out of them by a terrific snarling and barking and growling. I looked up. There, as I expected, were the wolves, unnatural brutes, tearing away at the carcass of their ancient kinsman, and quarrelling over his limbs. "If that is what you are about, my boys, you are welcome to your sport, only let me alone," said I to myself; and leaning back I was immediately fast asleep again. The truth is, not having had a comfortable night's rest for some time, I was very sleepy, Which will account for my apparent indifference to the near neighborhood of such unsatisfactory gentry.

In spite of snarling, and barking, and howling, and growling, and every other variety of noise which the genus *canis*, whether in a tame or wild state is capable of making, I slept on. To be sure I could not help dreaming about them; sometimes they were running off with my ten toes, then with my

fingers; then that a big fellow had got an awkward grip at my nose. The last dream, which was so particularly unpleasant, made me lift up my hand to ascertain whether that ornament of the human visage was in its proper place, when I felt several hot puffs of air blow on my cheek, and opening my eyes I beheld the glaring orbs of half a dozen wolves gazing down upon me over my barricade. Had not my dream given me warning, in another instant they would have been upon me. As it was they seemed inclined to make a spring and to finish the drama by eating me up, which I calculated they would have done in ten minutes, when seizing my spear, I swept it round, and as I knocked off one after the other the loud yelling they made showed the force of the blows I had, in my desperation, dealt on them. I then got up, and scraping a portion of the fire within reach of my hands, I kept the ends of a number of sticks burning in it, and as soon as the wolves came back, which they did not fail to do, I hove one at their noses. This made them wary. They must have taken me for a salamander or some fire-spitting monster; at all events, although some of the bolder ones every now and then came and had a look at me, licking their jaws and wishing they could eat me up, the singeing I gave their whiskers quickly drove them away, while the greater number kept at a respectful distance. At last when morning light returned, I started up, and uttering shouts and shrieks with the most hearty good-will, fired again at the foremost, and, as before, laying about me with my pole, put the remainder to an ignominous flight. I had not enjoyed a quiet night certainly, but I was much warmer than I should have been had my fire gone out. "It's an ill wind that blows no good." "Good may be got out of everything," I say. So the wolves said, when they supped off their old grandsire instead of me. Having also enjoyed a warm breakfast, I shouldered my rifle and pushed on as fast as my legs could carry me to overtake my friends. I was extremely anxious to get up with them before they descended into the plains; for as I supposed that the snow would

be melting there, I knew that I might have great difficulty in following their traces. I pushed on till noon, and then stopped but ten minutes to dine, or rather to rest and chew a bit of bear's flesh. That done, on again I went as fast as before. I did not at all like the notion of having to camp out by myself, for I was so sleepy that I fancied that I might be torn limb from limb by wolves or a bear without awaking; and certainly I might have been frozen to death. The evening came, the sun set, and though I was on the track of my friends, I could see nothing of them. Still I pushed on, because I might overtake them before dark, but at length the shades of night crept up the mountain's sides, and for what I could tell I still might be many hours distant from them. I could see very little way ahead; but I had arrived at a part of the mountain range where there there were some very ugly-looking precipices on either side of the pass, and I thought it more than likely, should I push on, that I might slip down one of them, when very probably I should not be brought up till I had had a jump of a couple of thousand feet or so. I could find no dry wood for a fire; but there were plenty of stones, and a superabundance of snow and a big overhanging rock near at hand. I therefore, built myself a hut with the stones and snow, the big rock forming the back. There was no door nor window, seeing that such would have been more useful to an enemy than to myself; but as there was no roof the space where it should have been enabled me to get into my abode, and allowed air and such light as the stars afforded to enter also. Some men would not have taken so much trouble for a single night, but as I thought that I very probably should be eaten if I did not, I did not think the trouble thrown away.

My castle being complete, I climbed over the wall, and sat down on a stone, which I intended as my pillow, to munch a piece of bear's flesh. I felt much better after it, and before going to sleep I bethought me that I would exercise my voice a little and fire off my rifle to frighten away any prowling bear who might otherwise take a fancy to inspect my fortress

while I might be asleep. My voice rang loudly amidst the solemn silence of that mountain region, and the crack of my rifle echoed from rock to rock, but I heard no sound in return, and having reloaded my rifle, and sung a few songs and a hymn, I knelt down, said my prayers, and placing my head on my rough pillow, went to sleep. I had slept some time when I was awoke by hearing a noise as if some one was climbing over the walls of my tower. Grasping my rifle, which I had placed leaning against the wall nearest me, ready for instant service, I looked up and there I saw the head of a bear looking down upon me. I was on the point of firing, as was natural, when I heard a voice say—

"Hollo, stranger, you snore very loudly," I sprang to my feet.

"Why, Obed and Elihu, old boys! is it you?" I exclaimed. "And my young friend Gog!"

"I might well say, is it you, Dick?" cried Obed and his brother, almost wringing off my hand. "We thought you were some hundred feet under the snow, with all the redskins, the White Dogs and Flintheads, and none of us ever expected to see you again, that we did not, let me tell you; but it won't make us less glad to find you come to life again. How is it you are here? Tell us."

In reply, I gave them a rapid sketch of my escape and adventures, and inquired anxiously after my friends. He told me that only two white men of our party had lost their lives, though several had been dug out of the snow, whereas, of the Indians, only old White Dog escaped.

"And Magog?" I asked, "my other young bear."

"Oh, we ate him," answered Obed; "he was an ill-natured brute, and as he bit one of the children. and we wanted some fresh meat, father ordered him to be knocked on the head. I guessed it would come to that. Now, the moment we heard your shots and shouts, Gog was full of fidgets, till he saw us starting off to see what it was about, and then up he got and

followed us like a dog. He is a sensible little brute, that he is."

This conversation took place while I, like a Jack in a box, stood inside my castle, and my friends outside. At last I bethought me that I should like to be on the move, if it was only the sooner to enjoy a cup of hot coffee and a pipe, luxuries I had had all day an especial longing for. They had been so eager to learn what had occurred to me, that it did not occur to them that the sooner we could get back to camp, the better for me. It was pitched, I found, in a sheltered nook, in a valley some way down the mountain, and thus their fires had been hidden from me, as well as the sound of their voices. Off we set, therefore, little Gog jumping and frisking before me as playful as a young puppy. It was a wonder he did not tumble over the precipices in the dark. I received a warm welcome and got a warm supper, and when I did once go to sleep, I believe that it would have taken a pretty heavy piece of ordnance fired over my head to awaken me.

We had now reached the extreme western edge of the Rocky Mountains, and our course was henceforth to be all down hill. We had expected to have had easy work of it, but when we stood on the edge of the cliffs and looked down the terrific precipices, the bottom of which we had by no means or other to reach, we very soon changed our minds. First we had to search for the side of the mountain with the least slope; that is to say, forming the greatest angle with the base. When found we saw that no oxen or horses could, by themselves, prevent a loaded wagon rushing down and being dashed to pieces. We therefore held a council to consider the best means to be adopted. Two plans were agreed on according to the nature of the ground. Where the descent was short and steep we unharnessed the cattle, and making one end of a rope fast to a rock or tree, we passed it through a block in the hinder part of the wagon, and thus lowered the vehicle down gradually to the next platform. The ropes were then unrove and secured to another rock or tree. It was a very slow operation, but it

was the only safe one. Indeed, in some places the descent was so precipitous that we had to unload the wagons altogether, and carry each article down separately. Two days were thus occupied; but when we looked up and saw the heights from which we had descended, and the steepness of the precipices above us, we had reasons, I thought, to be thankful. We now came to a series of sheer descents, long, excessively steep slopes of half-a-mile or more each. They were of a more treacherous character and required as much caution. We first cut down as many trees, with their branches on them, as we had wagons, and secured the butt-ends to the axletrees, while the thick branchy tops trailed behind digging into the ground. We were too wise, however, to risk the whole at once. First we got one of the lighter wagons with a steady pair of horses ahead. Then we locked all the wheels, and besides that made fast some stout ropes to either side. We remembered that "The greater haste the worst speed." "Gently, so, ho," was the word. On moved the wagon. Obed and I went to the horses' heads. It was ticklish work with all our care. Downward we slid. Often we could scarcely keep our own footing. I was very glad, I know, when we reached the bottom of the first descent. We had several more, however, to accomplish. Others, seeing our success, came following with the same caution, and succeeded as well. All but one party, a family of Irish emigrants, agreed that our plan was the only safe one. Pat Leary, however, and his sons, and sons-in-law, and wife, and daughters, and daughters-in-law, for though the eldest was not twenty, they were all married, cried out lustily against our proceedings.

"Arrah, now, why are ye afther bothering so long on the side of the mountain?" exclaimed Leary the elder. "Jist let the wagons now take an aisy slide down by thimselves, they'll raich the bottom safe enough. Don't ye see no harm has come to any one of them yet, at all, at all?"

"For the very reason friend Leary, because we have taken proper precautions to prevent an accident," observed Mr. Rag-

get, who had adopted a peculiarly sententious tone in speaking to Pat, a great contrast to the other's rapid style of utterance.

Pat was not to be convinced. One of the longest and steepest of the descents lay before us. On one side was a precipice or some six or seven hundred feet in depth. Pat insisted on leading the way. He and his boys were certain that they could trot their horses down it. "It was all so straight and easy."

We entreated them to let the women and children remain behind. With a bad grace they consented, charging us to bring them on to Californy after them. On they went. The descent was tolerably gentle for some way. They looked round laughing at us, cracking their whips. However, steeper and steeper it grew, and faster and faster they went, till, dashing on at a terrific speed, they were hidden from our sight.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sad fate of the poor Learys—Grief of the mother and sisters—We go in search of the missing ones—Find them at the bottom of the ravine—The Burial—Wild scene—Return to camp—Go on a sporting expedition—My battle with the hawks—Very nearly beaten—Short comes to the rescue—Consequences of indulging in a fit of romance on a journey—Go to sleep and find that my only companion is a huge rattlesnake.

I WAS describing our passage down the western slopes of the Rocky mountains, our worthy companion, Pat Leary, having taken it into his head that he had discovered a much more rapid way of reaching the bottom than the slow one which the rest of our party thought it prudent to pursue. As we stood on the platform immediately above the slope he had taken, we saw him dashing on at a furious speed not at all conscious of the danger he was running. As his wife and daughters, however, saw his rapid descent, they became so, and screamed out for him to stop. He was a great favorite with us all, in spite of a few eccentricities, for he was a capital fellow in the main, and had he not been so, the cries of the women would have made us anxious for his safety. Obed and I who were in advance of the rest of the party, could not resist the temptation of setting off to see what had become of him and to render him any assistance in our power. Leaving our wagon, therefore, in charge of two lads, we ran down the slope of the mountain as fast as our legs would carry us. On we went till we were almost done up, but the only sign of the Learys were the ruts which their wagon wheels had made in the softer spots on the mountain side; often they approached fearfully near the edge of the precipice on the left, and then

apparently the animals, seeing the danger, had inclined again to the right. We were already carried much further down the mountain than we intended, and began to repent having come, and to think of our long climb up again, when we saw, a considerable way below us, close to the precipice, some objects moving, which on descending farther, we discovered to be human beings. They were lying on the ground and waving their hands. As we proceeded we found that the nearest was our poor friend Leary.

"Oh, help them !—save them ! murther, murther, or they'll all be dashed to pieces," he shouted out, pointing down to the deep glen or gorge below us, through which rushed a rapid, roaring, foaming stream. Two of his sons lay close to him almost stunned. Four had started in the wagon. Where were the other two ? Where was the wagon ? The marks of the cart wheels verging to the left, and the broken ground at the edge of the precipice, told us too plainly what had occurred. We looked down the fearful ravine. No attempt we could make to aid the two unfortunate young men would avail. Far, far, down amid masses of rocks at the edge of the torrent lay a confused mass, amid which we could distinguish the wheel of a wagon, and the head of one of the animals which had drawn it, but nothing moved, no sound was heard. It was our conviction that both men and beasts had been, long ere they reached the bottom, deprived of life. We did not dscribe to the poor father what we had seen. He was hoping against hope that his sons had escaped. We needed no one to describe to us how the accident had occurred. The road sloped away to the left, and the animals, losing their footing, had been forced by the impetus of the wagon over the precipice, while he and his other two lads had mechanically leaped out at the moment it was about to make the fatal plunge. The two lads were stunned and so much bruised that when they came to themselves they could not walk, while Leary, though less hurt, what with grief and regret at his folly and alarm, had his nerves so completely unstrung that he lost all command over

himself. To leave them in this condition was impossible so, I volunteered to climb up the mountain to hurry on some of the party, with assistance; but Obed would not hear of it, and insisted on my remaining while he returned. I consented to his proposal, and having assisted me in dragging the three men to a distance from the precipice, off he started. My watch was a very painful one. Poor Leary was constantly raving, asking why his boys did not come up from below there, and crying out that he would go and look for them. I often had great difficulty in restraining him. One of his sons, too, was so severely hurt that I feared that he would sink before assistance could come. The other who was the eldest, was fully conscious of what had occurred, and croaned and cried bitterly, blaming himself and his father as being the cause of the death of his younger brothers, which was indeed too true. Many an anxious look did I cast up the mountain in the hope of seeing my companions on their descent. I expected them long before they could possibly arrive, for I had not calculated how much time it would occupy Obed in ascending, and the wagons with their wheels locked, and trees astern in descending the mountain.

The state of my poor friends almost unnerved me, and I began to think of grizzly bears and wolves, and all sorts of monsters which might scent us out. Though I had my rifle at my back I could scarcely hope to defend myself and my companions. Still I, of course, determined to do my best. As I looked towards the glen into which the wagon had shot over, I saw high in the air several huge birds rapidly wing their flight from various directions, and hovering over the spot ere they made a pounce down on it. I knew too well what they were—vultures drawn by their keen scent from afar to their dreadful banquet. They knew, whatever we might have hoped, that death was there.

At last the wagons appeared, and the sound of female voices shrieking and wailing gave me notice that Obed had told the poor wives and sisters of the sufferers what had occurred. It

was a most piteous scene. As soon as the wagons could be safely brought to a stop, some of the women threw themselves by the side of the sufferers, and hung over them, and kissed them, and embraced them convulsively, while the bereaved widows cried out for their husbands, and asked what had become of them. This state of things might have continued all day had not Mr. Ragget arrived and somewhat restored order. He first judiciously applied such remedies as were at hand to the sufferers, and then had them all lifted into a wagon, and on we proceeded to the bottom of the mountain. Soon after this we reached a spot whence what appeared a vast plain was seen stretching out before us, and became aware that we were near the termination of the mountain portion of our journey. Here and there we observed slight elevations, while several silvery lines meandering amid groves marked the course of what seemed small rivulets flowing towards the Pacific. We afterwards found that the slight elevations turned into considerable hills, the groves into vast forests, and the small rivulets into rapid rivers, which cost us much toil and danger to pass. We had still some way to descend before we reached a level spot, when, near the edge of the stream which rushed out of the gorge I have mentioned, we halted to encamp. Leaving the rest to make the usual arrangements without stopping to take food, I and three of the Raggets, with Leary's son-in-law, and one or two others, set off up the gorge to try and find the spot where the wagon and the bodies of our late companions lay. I should say that as we descended the mountain we had looked out for any practicable place by which we might reach the bottom of the gorge, but none could we discover. We had, of course, our rifles at our backs and our axes in our belts, and either crowbars or poles in our hands. The ground was rugged in the extreme. Sometimes we had to climb the sides of the precipices, now to wade along the edge of the stream, running a great risk of being carried off by the current. Sometimes we came to marshy spots into which we sunk nearly up to our middle; then we worked our way onward under

trees, swinging ourselves from bough to bough, but the greater part of the way we had to climb over hugh boulders with crevices between them, into which it would have been destruction to slip. We had all climbed to the top of one huge rock, expecting that we should see from it the spot at which we were aiming, when, on looking down on the opposite side, we found that there was at the bottom a watercourse with a fall of nearly twenty feet into it, while nothing could we see of the broken wagon. We had, therefore, to slip down the way we had come up, and to progress as before. It was weary, fatiguing work. Still we persevered; for there was, of course, a possibility that the poor young Learys might be alive, though of this we had very little hope.

We had been deceived as to the distance, and we judged that we must already have traveled a league or twelve miles. Obed suggested that we might have passed the spot, but this I did not think possible. Our course, as I mentioned, lay along the side of the torrent, but frequently we lost sight of it, though we did not cease to hear its loud roar, as the foaming waters rushed over its rocky bed. I calculated as I looked at it, what a mighty torrent would be shortly hurrying onward, when the snows above melted by the heat of the approaching summer. At length, climbing another rock, we saw not fifty yards from us the sad spectacle of which we were in search, the fragments of the wagon and the dead horses. We hurried on and soon reached the spot. Already over the horses were hovering eight or ten huge vultures, flapping their wings as they alighted, while with unearthly cries they tore away the flesh with their sharp talons and hooked beaks. They seemed inclined to dispute their prey with us; but on Obed and I firing we killed two of them, and the rest flew off; but we could see them hovering in the distance, ready to pounce down again as soon as we had retired. We instantly set to work with our crowbars and poles to turn over the broken wagon. The sight which met our eyes was sad indeed. There lay the two young men, fearfully crushed and mangled, directly under the wagon.

They must have clung to it as it descended, or have been entangled among the goods in it. They must instantly have been killed. We had wished to carry the bodies back to the camp, but in consequence of the impracticable character of the road we had come over this was impossible. We hunted about till at last we discovered a sort of basin among the rocks, into which the earth from above had washed. Here we dug two graves as deep as time would allow, and with scant ceremony, though not without a tear, we placed in them the two brothers. We knew that prayers for them were of no avail; they had gone to their account; but we did pray that we might not thus be hurriedly snatched away without a warning. There were plenty of slabs of stone on the side of the mountain chipped off by winter frosts and summer heats and rains, and so we placed one at the head of each grave, and then we left them to sleep on undisturbed. Probably many ages may roll by before that spot is again visited by human footsteps.

So engaged had we been in our painful employment that we did not perceive how rapidly daylight was decreasing, and before we had proceeded half a mile on our return journey we came to the disagreeable conclusion that we should be benighted before we could possibly reach the camp. Still we, of course, pushed on as long as we could see our way. As we had had no food since the morning, we were desperately hungry; but as Obed observed, "I guess we've plenty of water, mates, and maybe we shall kill a rattlesnake, and that won't be bad eating." The cold we did not much mind, though somewhat icy blasts came down the glen, for we were pretty well inured to that; but as we had nothing since the morning, our stomachs craved lustily for food, and I would have tried my teeth on the flesh of a gaunt wolf, or even on one of the vultures we had killed, if we could have got at them. We found our way in among a circle of boulders and there we passed the night, a most unpleasant one it was. At the earliest dawn we were on foot, but it took us nearly two hours to reach the camp. I will not describe the lamentations of the Leary fam-

fly when we gave them an account of our proceedings—the shrieks and wailing which the poor women commenced and continued for the greater part of the next twenty-four hours. As there was plenty of wood, water, and grass for the cattle, we determined to remain there a day to prepare for our journey across the level country. To avoid the lamentations of the unhappy wives, as soon as I had performed the part of the work allotted to me for the general good, stole from the camp to enjoy some portion of quiet. When the sun got up, as the wind was from the west, the heat became very great, and I did not feel inclined to move very fast.

Soon after leaving the camp, I observed several hawks hovering round a spot in the wood, the abode probably of some rabbits, hares, or other small game. By cautiously creeping on, I got within shot of one of them. I fired and down tumbled the monster bird. He was a huge creature, with a large hooked beak and immense claws, who, if he could not have carried off a lamb or a goose, would have had no trouble in flying away with a duck, or a fowl, or a rabbit. I observed where the others went to, and followed them till I reached a tolerably accessible cliff, at the top of which a whole colony seemed to reside; big and little, sires and offspring, were circling round, and making themselves quite at home. Having a fancy to examine the nature of their habitations, I looked about me to see how I could get up the cliff, and with my pole alone in hand commenced the ascent. This, from the nature of the ground, was not very difficult; and I had got within a dozen feet or so from their nests, and was standing on a broad ledge, looking up to ascertain how I could best ascend higher, when they espied me, or, as they had been all along watching me, they probably came to the conclusion that it was time to put a stop to my further proceedings. I had just discovered their nest, which was as large as such baskets as market women carry on their heads. It was composed of twigs and small sticks, none less than an inch in circumference. On the ledge below it were scattered numerous bones, and the skel-

etons and half-mangled bodies of pigeons, hares, and a variety of small birds. Without much consideration, I constituted myself the champion of smaller denizens of the wood, and axe in hand, was ascending to knock the robber stronghold to pieces, when old and young, with fierce cries, made a desperate sortie to knock off the assailant of their castle. Down they came upon me with the most desperate fury, dashing at my head and face, and evidently aiming at my eyes. I struck right and left with my axe, but it is a bad weapon for defence, and they laughed at all my efforts, only wheeling round to renew the attack.

Ten times rather would I have had a combat with a dozen wolves or a hungry grizzly. I should instantly have had both eyes torn from their sockets, had I not kept my left arm like a shield before them; and as it was, my forehead got some ugly blows which almost drove in the bone, while the blood flowing from the wounds nearly blinded me. Never have I felt so unmanned—so terribly alarmed. It was like being attacked by a host of demons. I could not seek safety in flight, for I should have broken my neck, as I dared not for a moment move my left arm from before my face, while my right was fully occupied in dealing blows on every side at my fierce enemies. I shrieked out at the top of my voice with downright terror, but I was too far from the camp, I fancied, to have any hope of being heard. Even my right arm began to get weary with striking at the empty air, and at the same time the boldness of my assailants increased. They attacked me in rear as well as in front, darting against my neck and the back of my ears, and so terribly did they beat me that I began fully to believe that I should be done to death by birds. Still had it not been for the dread of losing my eyes, I could easily have escaped.

At last, one big fellow, the father of the brood, I judged, pounced down and hit me on the temple within an inch of my right eye.

Just then, when almost in despair, I heard the voice of Sam

Short shouting out, "Throw yourself on the ground, Dick; face downward, Dick."

I did as he counseled, and the next moment a shot from his rifle brought down my chief foe, who fell close to me. Still he was not dead, and with the fury of despair, flapping his way up to me, he began to make such determined attacks on my head, that I feared he would have bit off my ear before I was able to disengage my right hand, with which I then gave him a blow on the head, which made him quiet for ever. Still the rest of the amiable family kept circling above me, giving me most disagreeable prongs, till another shot from Short's rifle killed two more, and the rest, discovering that I had an ally in the field, took to flight. He then came up, and having destroyed the nest, helped me down the cliff, for I really could scarcely have descended by myself, so completely shaken were my nerves with the novel contest in which I had engaged. I begged Sam not to mention in camp what had occurred, but he kept my counsel very badly, for he could not resist asking when I would like to go bird's-nesting again, and making so many other allusions that I thought it was best to tell the story, and got heartily laughed at for my pains. I, however, have always felt that it was no laughing matter, and that I was never in greater peril than on that occasion.

We next day proceeded on our journey, and for ten days or so made but slow progress, as we had numerous rivers to pass, and the change of climate from the cold of the mountains to the heat of the plains was very trying to man and beasts. We now took to encamping during the middle of the day, and travelling very early and late. In that way our animals got two unbroken rests instead of one, which was a very great advantage.

One day, after a long morning's journey, we had camped near a stream bordered by rich pastures of red and white clover. As I have hinted, although I was on the most friendly terms with all my companions, I now and then had a longing to be by myself, to commune with my own thoughts, and to

call to mind friends whose ideas and manners were so different from those of my present associates As I frequently did, therefore, I left the camp, and wandered on up the stream till I came to a little grove of sumach and cherry trees, under whose shade I sat down to enjoy the cool air, and to watch the clear water which flowed bubbling by. The sweet-scented flowers of spring were bursting out from many a bush, and encumbering the ground around me. Their balmy odors filled my nostrils, the fresh air played round my brow, and the murmur of the stream sounded in my ears, till my pleased senses became completely overcome by the surrounding soporific influences, and wandered far away amid the regions of dreamland; in other words, I went fast asleep. At last I awoke, and rubbed my eyes; I had good reason for rubbing them, for the beautiful landscape on which they had closed was no longer before them. There was the murmur of the stream, and the scent of the flowers, but obscurity was around me, and the stars were glittering brightly overhead. How far in the night it was I could not guess. How to follow my companions too, was a question, as it was so dark that I could not have found my way to the camp, even if they had been there. The only cause I could then assign for my having slept so long, was that I must have been surrounded by some herbs of soporific power, though, perhaps, the perfect tranquility of the spot, the heat of the weather, and the exertion I had of late gone through with were sufficient reasons for the unusual length of my nap. Having no hopes of overtaking my friends that night, I judged that the best thing I could do was to stay where I was and to go to sleep again. This was, however, not very easy to do. I was lightly clad, and the night damp had made me feel very chilly. It was not, therefore, till morning that sleep again overpowered me. It would have been better for me had I kept awake. Suddenly I opened my eyes with a start. The sun had already risen, and was glancing through the woods on my head. I head a noise — a rustling in the grass. I turned my head, and there, to my horror, I beheld a huge rattlesnake about to spring on me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A fight with a rattlesnake, and a description of my enemy—Find the camp deserted—I Feel very hungry—Kill a goose—See some horsemen in the distance—Find a river between me and them—Build a raft, and take a longer voyage than I intend—Shoot a fall, and have the pleasant prospect of being carried down a cataract.

I SPRANG up as if I had been galvanized, and leaped a dozen feet or more away from the fangs of the rattlesnake. I had left my pole at the camp, and I had placed my rifle by my side when I went to sleep. There it lay, close to the rattlesnake. My axe was in my belt, but it is not a good weapon for the attack of either birds or snakes. My enemy was advancing towards me, his tail rattling ominously. My foot as I leaped struck a stone—the only one appearing thereabouts among the grass. I seized it, and dashed it down on the head of the reptile, who was not then a yard from me, with such force that it drove its body right down into the earth, while its tail wriggled and rattled away in a vain endeavor to extricate itself I ran and picked up my rifle, and looked round to see that I had left nothing behind me. I could not help stopping before I proceeded on my way, to exanine the creature I had killed. It was of a yellowish-brown color, marked all down its back with spots of a dark brown, while from the head down the neck ran three longitudinal lines of the same hue. The head was large and flat, and covered with small scales. It was almost five feet long, and as thick as my wrist, and altogether a very formidable-looking snake. The rattlesnake has a small set of teeth, which serve to catch and retain its prey, and the poisonous fangs with which it kills them. These latter are placed in the upper jaw, and when not employed remain flat

along it. It is one of the most deadly poisonous serpents, and would be very dangerous were it not that it is very sluggish in its movements, and that it has a rattle at the end of its tail, with which it cannot avoid giving notice of its approach. The rattle is a collection of bones, formed something like the backbone of a human being. It looks as if it were fastened on outside the tail, at its very tip. The broad part of the rattle is placed perpendicularly to the body, and it is so contrived that each bone strikes against two others at the same time, so as to multiply the rattling sound. I have often thought how glad the rattlesnake would be to get rid of his rattle, just as a person with a bad character, justly obtained, would like to have the stigma removed, that he may commit more mischief on the unwary. The more I have travelled, and the longer I have lived, the greater reason I have to admire the wonderful and beautiful arrangements of the Creator of all things. Why venomous serpents were formed I cannot say, though I am very certain it was for a good object; but it is very evident why the snake I have been describing was furnished with a rattle—that man might be warned of its approach. My examination of the snake did not last long. I afterwards saw and killed many others. Quitting the spot, I hurried towards the camp. When I thought that I had gone a sufficient distance I expected to hear the voices of my associates; but all was silent. I pushed on as fast as I could among the trees. The camp had been placed in a pleasant open glade. I was certain that I had reached the spot. I looked round on every side. No one was there; but there were the black patches where the fires had been, and a few bones and straw scattered about, and other signs of a deserted encampment. From the character of the ground the trail was very indistinct. Still I thought that I could follow it, and off I set as fast as I could walk. I had not gone far before I became aware that I had lost the track. I looked about in every direction in vain. I could not find it. I was getting very hungry. At last I could go on no longer; so I bethought me that I would kill some bird or beast for

breakfast. On examining, however, my powder-flask, what was my dismay to find that I had only five or six charges at the utmost. At that early time of the year there were no berries or wild fruits ripe. Later I might have found wild cherries in abundance, and raspberries, and strawberries, on which I could have supported nature. "I must take care not to throw a shot away," I said to myself, as I looked about in search of game. Just then I saw the glimmer of water through the trees, and walking on, I found myself by the side of a beautiful lake, a mile or more long, and half a mile wide. I was not certainly in a humor to contemplate its beauty, but I was very much in the mood to admire some flocks of geese and ducks which were disporting themselves on its surface, in happy igorance of the presence of man. I almost trembled with anxiety as I crept along the margin of the lake, till I could get near enought to obtain a shot at one of them. A duck would have satisfied me, but as a goose being larger would last longer, I waited till one came near. A stately fellow came gliding up, picking insects off the reeds close to the margin. I fired. He rose and fluttered his wings awhile, and then down he flopped close to me. I sprang forward like a famished wolf, and very nearly toppled heels over head into the water, when, had I escaped drowning, I should, at all events, have spoiled the remainder of my powder in my eagerness to grasp my prey. At first he fluttered away from the land, but something turned him, and he came back so close that I caught hold of a wing, and hauling him on shore, very soon put an end to his sufferings. To collect sticks, light a fire, pluck and clean out my bird, was the work of a few minutes. I cannot say that the first part I ate of him was very much done, for I tore off a wing and then put the body back to get more roasted while I satisfied the more violent cravings of hunger. I washed down my breakfast with a draught of water from the lake, and then hurried on again towards the west. Before, when I had lost my friends, I dreaded suffering from cold, now I had to fear the heat. The sun came down with terrific force on my head, and seemed

at times it would scorch my brain to a cinder. At last I felt that if I went on longer I might be struck down by it, so I threw myself on the ground under the shade of a wide-spreading cedar, in a little wood, which contained besides cedars, pine trees. birch, wild cherries, hawthorn, sweet willow, with honeysuckle and sumach. I slept an hour or more, and, having eaten some more goose, continued my journey. Though I kept my eyes actively engaged on every side I could discover no trace of my friends.

It was evening, when, as I was travelling along the banks of a river towards the west, I saw on the opposite side, and on the summit of a rocky ridge, which extended at a distance for some miles parallel with it, two horsemen. From the way they rode along I had no doubt that they were my friends the Raggets in search of me. Had they been going east I might have had hopes of cutting them off on their return; but they were moving west, and going from me. I shouted at the top of my voice, though at that distance they could not possibly hear me. I took off my jacket; I waved it frantically. I was about to plunge into the river to swim across, but the current was very strong and rapid, swelled by the melting snows of the mountains. I had reason to dread being carried away should I make the attempt. I ran on, hoping to find a ford or some high spot whence my signals might be more easily seen. No elevated ground appeared, but the banks were very uneven, sometimes rocky, in some places overgrown with brushwood, so that my progress was very slow, and the horsemen disappeared in the distance.

It soon after this grew dark, and this circumstance made me hope that should the horsemen I had seen have been the Raggets, the camp could not be very far off; but then again I had sufficient experience to teach me that it would be vain to attempt reaching it in the dark. I had now to look about for a place in which to pass the night. I wished to avoid the vicinity of rattlesnakes as well as of bears and wolves. I selected a dry bank near the river, and set to work to collect a quantity

of long grass which grew about, not only to form a mattress, but to protect me from the cold and the dew of the night. The thick tough grass cut my hands sadly as I plucked it, and laughed at the efforts of my axe to cut it down. At length, however, I managed to cut and pluck enough for my purpose, and piling it in an oblong heap, I burrowed under it longways, keeping a bundle in my hands to serve as a pillow. I was surprised to find how warm and comfortable I felt.

I was congratulating myself on this, and was just dozing off into sleep, when I was roused up again by the dreadful sound of the rattlesnake's tail. I started up to listen from which side the serpent was approaching; for had I moved I might have run directly on it. A horror seized me. It appeared as if I was surrounded by the creatures. On every side of me there was the same noise. I began to fancy that I was dreaming. I had never heard of so many rattlesnakes being found together. Still I was sure that I was awake. There was the noise again. It was quite close to me. I put out my hand and caught a grasshopper, or rather a sort of locust. The sound of their wings resembles very much that made by the rattlesnake when about to dart on its prey. I was sure that was the noise I had heard. "There may be thousands for what I may care; they can't eat or sting me," I said to myself; and then went to sleep.

I awoke very much refreshed, but so strongly had the thought of rattlesnakes been impressed on my mind, that my first impulse on waking was to look cautiously round to ascertain that none were near. Finding that, as far I could see, the coast was clear, I jumped up and shook myself, then bathed my face in the river, and, which I never failed to do, said my prayers, returned thanks to Him who had hitherto so mercifully preserved me, and continued on my journey.

I was now anxious to get to the other bank of the river, which I was convinced my companions had crossed by some ford higher up, and which I had missed. In vain, however, I searched for one; the river as I advanced, grew wider and more

rapid, as other streams poured into it; and at length I came to the conclusion that I must either go back again until I had found the ford, or swim the river and ferry over my gun and powder horn, or construct a raft, and attempt the passage on it myself. While I was balancing in my mind which I should do, my eye fell on a patch of withes or osiers, growing in a shallow bend of the river close to the bank. This decided me. I would make a raft, for the withes would enable me to fasten it together. I set to work, and cut down with my faithful axe, a number of young trees, selecting firs and those of the lighter description of wood. That reminds me, that I would advise every traveller in wild countries to carry an axe, and to know how to use it. It is a weapon which to use properly requires both care and practice.

In my search for fit trees I came upon several dry logs, which, from being so much lighter than the green trees, were very valuable. Having collected my materials, I commenced the construction of my raft, and finished it in half an hour, very much to my satisfaction. I built it partly in the water, so that I might have less difficulty in launching it. I had to prepare a very essential implement to enable me to perform my voyage, namely, a long pole with which to shove the raft along. I had cut down a tall sapling, and cleared it of its boughs, when I heard a rushing noise louder than that hitherto produced by the current. I ran towards the river, dragging my pole, when, as I got near it, I saw that a fresh body of water, caused by the rapid melting of the snow, or the giving way of some natural dam higher up the stream, was rushing down the channel, and raising its waters considerably above their usual level. I was just in time to see my raft, which I had constructed with so much labor, and which I had left safely on the shore, slowly gliding away from it. I could not bear the idea of losing it, and, without a moment's consideration, I made a rush into the water, caught hold of it just as I found myself up to my middle, and with a spring threw myself upon it, still, however keeping hold of my pole. The shove I of

necessity gave the raft sent it further from the shore, and by the time I gained my feet, and was in a position to attempt guiding the raft, I found that it had got completely out in the impetuous current, and was being rapidly hurried down it. I tried to reach the bottom with my pole, and though I succeeded, I could in no way stem the current. I should have been wiser had I tried to get back to the shore I had left; instead of this, by following up my first purpose of crossing, I quickly got into a stronger part of the current, and was sent whirling more quickly downward. Holding my pole, I balanced myself as well as I could, prepared for any emergency. The river was four or five hundred yards wide at least, and I saw that I could not hope on this part to reach the opposite or northern shore. The river seemed free from rocks, and as there was no particular danger that I saw to be apprehended, it occurred to me that I was prosecuting my journey in a far more expeditious and pleasant way than I had expected. I was congratulating myself on this circumstance, when I became suddenly conscious that the noise of the rushing water had greatly increased. Looking ahead, down the river, the water seemed to bubble and foam more than where I was, while a cloud of mist hung over the spot. The dreadful conviction forced itself on me that I was approaching a rapid, or perhaps a waterfall, down which I should be whirled hopelessly, and dashed to pieces.

Again I plunged my pole to the bottom, but it only made the raft whirl round—I had no power of guiding it. On it went. The raft began to tumble and pitch; it was in a rapid of considerable length. The additional rush of water hid many of the rocks; now and then, however, I saw their black tops rising out of the mass of foam which surrounded them. I prayed that I might not strike one. I looked anxiously ahead with compressed lips. The water roared, and foamed, and hissed about me. I might have been proud of my raft-making skill; had not my ark been well built it would soon have gone to pieces. Before long my fears were with reason increased. Before me rose a line of black rocks. There seemed scarcely

room for the raft to pass between them. I could no longer keep my feet. I sat down, holding my pole. The raft was driving directly down upon a rock. It swerved a little. I shooved my pole against the rock, and it glanced clear. On it went—but numerous other dangers appeared. I was whirled by the rocks, the foam dashed from them flying over me. I felt a dreadful blow; the raft quivered. I thought all was over with me, but it floated clear of the rock against which it had struck, and on I went. Suddenly the jerking motion of the raft ceased. I was clear of the rapid. I tried again to pole towards the shore, but the water was so deep, and the current so rapid, that I was able to make but slight progress across the river, when the raft began to pitch again, and I found that I was in another rapid. Away I was whirled as before. There were more rocks in this rapid; at all events the raft drove against more, and it began to suffer from the repeated shocks it was receiving—parts of it got loosened, and I dreaded every moment to see it part asunder, and to find myself hurried amid its fragments to destruction. Again a space of smooth water appeared, but it was smooth because it was very deep, and I could make but little way towards the shore among its whirling eddies. Still for the present I was safe, and had time to look about me.

Thus I floated on, when a loud thundering noise assailed my ears, and a mass of mist rose before my eyes, giving evidence indubitable that I was approaching a forminable cataract. I had seen Niagara. Should this only be half its height it would be sufficient to make mincemeat of me. In vain I looked around for aid, and clinging desperately to my raft I resigned myself to my fate.

CHAPTER XIX.

Unexpectedly reach the bank and land in safety—My clothes are in tatters—After making a long journey find that I have returned to the very spot which I left—Encounter a hungry wolf—Suffer for want of water—Meet a lynx, but find no liquid—Go to bed among some nests of rattlesnakes—Slaughter a host of snakes and sip the dew of the morning—More rattlesnakes—My onward journey continued—My cry is still for water—Obtain a larger share than I require—I swim down the stream, and on landing am received by a huge grizzly.

THERE was only one way I conceived by which, humanly speaking, I could possibly have been saved. I was whirled furiously down the current. I saw a short distance before me, the commencement of the rapid which led to the cataract, when I felt the raft turn slightly round, and half stop, as it were, and by the appearance of the water I was convinced that it had got into an eddy. I darted down my pole. It speedily struck the bottom. I shoved with all my might. New energy returned to me. I sprang to my feet. The raft no longer advanced towards the rapid, but I found that I could urge it surely and steadily towards the shore. A shout of joy, and an exclamation of thankfulness escaped my lips as it reached the bank, and, by the aid of my pole, I leaped on to the dry land a dozen feet at least from the edge. I was preserved from immediate death. But where had I drifted to? Where were my friends? What prospect had I of obtaining food to sustain life till I could find them? All these were questions which I asked myself, but to which I could give no satisfactory answer. Scarcely had I reached the shore than my raft, which I had not secured to it, began to drift away. Onward it went down the stream. I could not recover it; so a

very natural impulse made me follow its course along the banks. I ran on for two or three hundred yards, when I arrived at the edge of a roaring cataract, some forty feet deep at least. First, there was a foaming rapid, with here and there black rocks appearing amid the sea of froth, and then came a dark treacherous mass of water, which curled over and fell downwards in a broad curtain into a deep pool out of which there arose a cloud of dense spray with a deafening roar; and then the river went gliding away, dark and smooth, in innumerable eddies, showing the rapidity of the current, till it was concealed by thick woods and rocks. I now felt more than ever how deeply grateful I ought to be for the way I had been preserved, for not an instant longer could I have existed had I once reached the edge of the cataract.

I had, however, no time to lose, so shouldering my rifle and pole, I struck off at a right angle from the course of the river, hoping thus to come across the track of my friends. I had, it must be remembered, but two charges of powder remaining, and as that season of the year there were no fruits ripe, my existence depended on my making an economical use of them. I had another source of anxiety. I had left the camp in a pair of thin old shoes, and they were now so worn out and coming so completely to pieces, that they no longer afforded any protection to my feet, which were already cruelly cut. My only resource, therefore, was to tear off the sleeves of my jacket, with which I bound them up. This afforded me some relief; but the ground near the river was in many places rocky, so that these bandages quickly again wore out. The sky, too, became cloudy, and the wind changed constantly, so that when I got into a hollow where I could not see any distant object by which to guide my course, I was often uncertain in which direction I was going. I found also, after I left the river, a great scarcity of water; the heat had dried up all the water-holes and rivulets, and I thus began to suffer much from thirst. The pangs increased as I walked on. I might have killed a bird, or some animal, and quenched my thirst with their blood;

but as I might require their flesh for food I did not wish to expend a charge of powder till my present stock of meat was exhausted. It was getting dark. I was more thirsty than hungry; so on I went in the hopes of reaching a spring before it was quite dark. I looked about me. After a time, I could not help fancying that the features of the country were very similar to those through which I had passed some hours before, and at length the disagreeable fact forced itself on me that I had returned back on my own track, and that all my late exertions had been completely thrown away. For an instant I felt very much inclined to despair of reaching my friends, but I quickly recovered myself, and the clouds clearing away in the west, the glow of the setting sun showed me the right direction to take. I therefore determined to push on as hard as I could so long as the least glimmer of light enabled me to find my way.

I had not gone far, however, when I heard a rustling noise in a copse close to which I was passing, and presently out of it stalked a huge gaunt wolf, and planted himself before me in a threatening attitude, some twenty paces in advance, as if he had resolved to dispute my onward progress. My first impulse was naturally to fire, but I recollected that if I did, I might not possibly kill him, as I had only small shot, and that though I did kill him, his flesh would be far from pleasant food. I knew that if I showed the slightest symptoms of fear he might fly at me, so I faced him boldly, as I had faced many of his brethren before, and tried to look somewhat braver than I felt. I waved my long pole towards him and advanced a pace or two, on which he retreated, still keeping his piercing eye fixed savagely on me. Again I advanced, and began shouting as loud as I could, hoping thus to frighten him away, but instead of this he set up the most terrific howls, which I could not help interpreting as invitations to his comrades to assemble from far and near, in order to make a meal on my carcass. The more he howled the louder I shouted, and the odd idea occurring to me that if I shouted out real names the wolf would become more

alarmed, I called by name all the Raggets, and Short and Noggin to come to my assistance, and looked round, pretending I expected them to appear. The wolf I thought, winked his wicked eye, as much as to say, "That's all gammon; don't suppose you can do an old soldier like me;" but I cannot say positively as it was growing dark. Still he would not move, and I had no wish to get nearer his fangs. I continued shouting, and he went on howling, and a sweet concert we must have made, for I had bawled till I was hoarse. I have an idea that my shouts kept his friends away. Perhaps it prevented them from hearing what he was saying. At length, much to my relief, I saw him turn his head, first on one side and then on the other, and then about he went, as if he had given up all hopes of his expected supper, and away he skulked into the wood. On seeing this my courage rose to the highest pitch, and after him I went, shaking my pole and shouting and shrieking and hallooing at the very top of my voice to expedite his movements; and it is my belief that he was so frightened that he did not stop again to look round till he had got many a mile from where he met me; though I own that when we first set eyes on each other, I was much the more frightened of the two.

The shades of evening were now approaching, and I was anxious in which to find a place in which I could spend the night in tolerable safety. Scarcely, however, had the wolf disappeared, than an old lynx, followed by a young one, trotted up close to me. I got my rifle ready, but rather than fire I began shouting and shrieking as before, and they continued their course without molesting me. My great wish was now to find water. A draught of the pure liquid would have appeared like the richest nectar. Hurrying on, I saw a green spot with some rushes growing near. "There must be water," I exclaimed, rushing on with eager haste, like the pilgrim in the desert, towards the longed for oasis, even fancying that I saw the shining surface through the trees. I reached the spot; I looked about; there were the rushes sure enough, and there

had been the water, but it was dried up. Oh, how thirsty I felt! I thought I might find some moisture at the roots of the rushes. I pulled them up and sucked eagerly at them, but they afforded no moisture to my parched lips. I had no resource, therefore, but to go liquidless to bed. It was rapidly getting dark, so I had no time to lose. I saw a large stone at a little distance, and thinking that it would afford me some protection if I slept beside it, I began to pull up some rushes with which to form my bed. Having collected as many as I could carry, I took them to the spot and threw them on the ground. I went back for more, and having scattered them about and piled up a few for a pillow, was about to throw myself on this quickly-formed couch when I saw, just under the stone, what I at first took for a stick, but which then beginning to move, exhibited itself to me as a monstrous rattlesnake, with its body coiled up and its head erect, its fierce eyes glitering, and its forked tongue moving rapidly to and fro as if eager to bite me. I had disturbed it from its slumbers, and it was naturally excessively angry. I did not stop to let it bite me, but sprang back several feet before I recovered my usual coolness. I felt sadly conscious that I was not like myself, and that my nervous system was very much upset. Regaining my self-possession pretty quickly, however, I once more advanced, and settled the creature with a blow of my stick.

The strokes I gave the ground soon roused up several other rattlesnakes, and I found that a whole brood were collected under the stone. As they are slow-moving creatures, I was able to kill every one of them before they could escape. They would have been somewhat unpleasant companions to me during my nocturnal slumbers. Scarcely had I despatched my rattle-tailed enemies, than turning over with my foot some smaller stones near the big one, out wriggled a number of other snakes, black, brown and yellow, twisting and turning amid the grass, many making directly towards me. To be surrounded, even in daylight by such creatures would have been especially unpleasant, but in the dusk, when I could scarcely see

them, the sensations I experienced were scarcely bearable. I felt inclined to shriek out at the top of my voice, but I restrained myself, and began slashing away right and left with my stick. Some I killed, but the others being more nimble than the rattlesnakes, escaped. Still I could not venture to proceed in the dark, nor could I stay on my legs all night; but I had no fancy to sleep near where I had killed the snakes. I looked about, therefore, for another suitable spot, and having selected it, I lashed about in every direction with my stick, so that any lurking serpent must of necessity be killed or put to flight. Then I collected more rushes, and taking a suck at a piece of dry duck for my supper, threw myself at my length on them and tried to go to sleep. It was no easy matter to do this, as I could not help remembering that I was surrounded by venomous creatures and wild beasts of all sorts, who might find me out during my slumbers and rouse me up in a very unpleasant way. At last, however, I closed my eyes, and so tightly did they remained sealed that the sun had arisen before I awoke. I started up and looked around me. Neither venomus serpents nor wild beasts were near, but the bodies of the snakes I had killed lying about showed me the reality of what had occurred. I started to my feet, and a few shakes completed my toilet. I had hoped to have awoke before daylight, that I might have time to collect the dew from the branches of the trees and from the long grass, that I might at least moisten my lips. I felt as if all the the liquid would be dried up before it got down my throat. But, alas! when I looked round, so hot was the sun, and so dry the atmosphere, that scarcely a drop could I find, even in the shade, sufficient to wet my tongue. I however plucked some cool grass and chewed it, and then continued on my journey. I was now able to proceed with more certainty than on the previous day. As I walked on my glance was turned on every side for the sort of vegetation which might indicate the vicinity of water. Every height I came near I ascended, that I might enjoy a wider range of vision. I was all this time suffering dreadfully from my feet.

Sometimes I passed over a wide extent of ground covered with small sharp stones, which speedily wore out all the bandages which I had fastened round my feet. That was bad enough; but soon afterwards I came to a tract overgrown with stunted prickly pears, or *cacti* as they are called. It was very much as if the ground were planted thickly with short swords, daggers, dirks and penknives. Walk as carefully as I could, my feet and legs were constantly striking against them, and from my shins to the soles of my feet I was covered with wounds and blood. My jacket was soon used up, and I then had to begin on the lower part of the legs of my trousers, off which I tore shreds as I required them. At last I sat down on a stone to apply fresh bandages to my feet, and what with the heat, and thirst, and hunger, and weakness, and sickness, and pain, and anxiety, I felt more inclined to cry than I had ever in my life before; but I did not cry. I was too much dried up for that, I suppose. My next impulse was to throw myself down on the ground and give up the struggle. However, I did not remain long in that mood. It is the worst mood to encourage. I had always belonged to the "try" school. "No, I will not give in," I exclaimed suddenly; "I will trust to Providence to carry me out of my difficulties." Still I was so weak and I felt so helpless that I sat and sat on till I was about to fall into a sort of lethargy, from which I might have had no power to arouse myself. Suddenly, however, my ears caught the well known and justly-dreaded sound of the rattlesnakes's rattle. I sprang up all alive in a moment, and saw the creature half a-dozen paces from me, approaching through the grass. A blow with my long stick, however, soon stopped his rattle, and remembering how much time I had lost, hurried on. I bethought me as I did so, that I had offered but an ungrateful return to the poor snake for the services he had rendered me, for had it not been for him I might never again have stirred from the stone on which I was sitting till I had fallen off into the arms of death.

I now walked on more rapidly than before, and in about an

hour saw before me a more thickly-wooded country than I had yet passed. I pressed forward towards it. I should find shade, and perhaps—what I so earnestly wished for—water. The wood was extensive, and looked gloomy enough when I first entered it, though I felt the shade most grateful after the glare of the open prairies. The sun, also, found its way sufficiently through the foliage, only now bursting forth to enable me to steer my course as before. I have described the silence of the snow mountains. I might now speak of the language of the woods. I sat down to adjust my feet-coverings, and when my feet ceased to tread on the grass and dead leaves, I became conscious that I was surrounded by a low rustling noise. At first I thought that the sound was caused by the wind among the dry leaves, but I was soon convinced that it was made by the young buds breaking forth from the cases which had shielded them during the cold of early spring—that I literally heard the trees growing! I did not rest long, for I was afraid of falling into my former state. On I limped—unable to help uttering every now and then a complaining "Oh!" as my foot trod on a thorn or knocked against a stone. I grew faint and more faint—"Water! water! water!" I ejaculated. How dreadful is thirst! "I cannot stand it longer," I cried out; but I felt it would be suicide to stop as long as I could move, and the next instant a low murmuring, rushing sound reached my ears. I thought it was fancy, but still I dragged on as fast as I could my weary steps. The noise increased—it was that of a waterfall—I was certain of it. I tried to hurry on my feet, and scarcely felt the pricks and cuts they were receiving. I caught sight of the glittering spray through an opening in the woods. I fancied that I felt the coolness of the air passing over it. On I went. There was the water rushing, gurgling, foaming away; but as I sprang on, forgetting my weakness, I found myself on the top of a rock, over which I very nearly toppled into the sought-for stream, twenty feet or more below me. I looked about for a path to lead me down to it. I saw, a little way higher up the stream, part of the bank less steep than the

rest. I ran towards it. I slid down; but what was my dismay to find that I could not stop myself, and into the water I plunged, with my rifle and powder-flask at my back! I had now more of the element I had been so eagerly desiring than was pleasant. My feet, however, touched the bottom, and stooping down, I let the water run into my mouth and wash my dried-up face. Oh, how delicious it was! It revived me and restored my strength; and then I began to consider how I was again to get out of the stream. The current was so strong that I dare not let go the bank, lest I should be carried off my feet. I could not hope to climb up the rock down which I had come, and those each side were still steeper. The matter was soon settled for me, for suddenly I felt myself taken off my feet, and down the stream I drifted. I kept as close to the bank as I could, grasping at the rocks as I passed, and endeavoring to climb up by them out of the water. My anxiety was to ascertain whether or not I was above the waterfall. If above it, I might be carried down, and fall into the very danger I had before escaped. I tried to make out by the sound but could not tell, nor could I see the spray which I had before observed. Still I hoped that I was below it. On I went, drifting down the stream just as I have seen a dog carried along a river when he is trying to climb up on a steep bank. Some bushes appeared. I caught at them—several broke in my grasp. I caught eagerly at others. My strength was failing me. At length I seized one which held. Close to it I saw that there was a resting-place for my feet. I was about to draw myself out of the water, when, on looking up, what should I see on the top of the bank but a huge bear gazing intently down on me, and licking his jaws as if in contemplation of a pleasant repast.

CHAPTER XX.

I look at the bear, and the bear looks at me—I climb up and he tries to catch me, but I dodge him and escape—Proceed on—Find a hollow tree, and make my bed in the interior—Pleasant sleep unpleasantly disturbed—My friend the grizzly again—I escape up a tree, and Bruin occupies my bed—We try each other's patience—I watch for an opportunity of escaping, and he watches to catch me.

THE bear looked very fierce; but I felt desperately desperate, and determined not to be compelled by him to continue my voyage. So grasping the branch, I gradually drew myself up by it nearly out of the water. I got one knee on the bank; the bear gave a growl; then I got the other knee on terra firma; the bear growled again. I was not to be intimidated. I had never let go my pole. I sprang to my feet and stood looking up at the monster. He growled more fiercely than ever, as if to warn me that I was intruding on his domains. "Growl away, old Bruin," I exclaimed, "I do not fear you. Stop me from getting to the top of the bank you shall not." I flourished my stick as I spoke. He took the movement as a challenge, and began to descend. The top was not nearly so steep as the place on which I stood. The bear got down tolerably well, growling as he advanced, and picking his way. My rifle was loaded but I had every reason to doubt that it would go off, after the ducking it had got, though the muzzle had not got under the water. I flourished my pole, therefore, at the bear, and shouted at the top of my voice, but it did not stop him. Just above me was a ledge. I climbed up to it, and there awaited the approach of the bear. The

ground above was very steep and slippery. On he came, faster and faster. My shouts had enraged him, and he was eager to have a grab at me. I ran up a little way higher, and then turned as if intending to spring back into the water. He was afraid he should lose me, and forgetting his previous caution, he sprang on to catch me. As he did so I leaped nimbly on one side, and he toppled over, head foremost, souse into the water. I saw him struggling away to regain the bank; I did not stop to watch him, however, but sprang upwards with all the agility I could exert, and did not stop until I had reached the summit. Never have I gone through so many adventures for the sake of a mouthful of water; I had not even, as it were, had enough, so I determined to keep down the stream for the rest of the day.

My clothes very quickly dried, which is not surprising, considering that I had on only the remnants of my jacket, a shirt, and the upper part of my trousers. The legs were bound round my feet. The water had, however, so much revived me that I began to feel a greater sensation of hunger than I had before experienced. I had but one piece of my dried duck left. I nibbled a bit as I walked on, keeping the remainder for supper. On what I was to breakfast was a question which, if my powder failed me, might be difficult to solve. Sometimes I lost sight of the water, but quickly regained, ever and anon returned, where the bank was practicable, to take a refreshing sip. As may be supposed, I took care never to get out of the hearing of its pleasant sound. I did not see the waterfall, and therefore concluded that I must have fallen into the stream a short way below it. Night was again approaching. I looked about in every direction for a spot in which I might pass it. At last I came upon a huge pine tree, which had been struck by lightning and lay prostrate on the ground. The centre part of the trunk was hollowed out something like a dug-out canoe, and on examining it I bethought me that it would make a peculiarly comfortable abode for the night. I therefore set to work to clear out all the rubbish inside which might conceal

any creatures, and then collected some large sheets of birch bark which lay stripped off some neighboring trees. This I placed over the top to form a roof, and a very comfortable sort of abode I considered that I had made. It was a safe one also, I thought, for no snake was likely to climb into it, nor was it probable that any wild animal would find me out. I now ate my last piece of meat, and then went down to the river and took a hearty draught of water, and far felt more invigorated than I had been for some time. This done, I returned to my hollow tree, crept in, drew the sheets of birch bark over me, and went comfortably to sleep. Oh, how I did enjoy that sleep! I felt so much more secure than I had ever been at night since I commenced my wanderings. I awoke in the middle of the night, but it was to turn myself round and to think how comfortable I was. I had, however, some causes for anxiety. How should I protect myself if attacted either by savages or wild beasts? how should I procure food, and how should I defend my feet when all my bandages were worn out, shoud I not succeed in finding my friends? The most pressing matter was how to procure food. Suddenly I recollected that I had once put a couple of fish-hooks in a pocket-book which I carried with me. I could not sleep till I had pulled it out and ascertained that they were there. A rod I should have no difficulty in forming; but how to make a line was the puzzle. At last I remembered that my jacket was sewn together with very course strong thread, and I thought that I could manufacture a line out of it. Having come to this satisfactory conclusion, I again went to sleep.

I had but a short time closed my eyes, when once more I was awoke by a noise, as if something was scratching on the outside of the tree in which I lay. What could it be? The scratching continued, and then there was a snuffing sound, as if a snout was smelling about in the neighborhood. The noises were suspicious and somewhat alarming. I did not like to move to ascertain what caused them, but I could not help dreading that they were made by some wandering bear who

had smelt me out, and was now trying to get a nearer inspection of me. The scratching and snuffing continued, and then I was certain that the creature, whatever it was, was climbing up on the trunk. It had done so, but it tumbled off again. Soon, however, it came close up to me. I could contain myself no longer. I wished to ascertain the worst. I gently slid off the piece of bark above my head and sat upright. I speedily, though, popped down again. My worst suspicions were confirmed. It was a bear, and very likely the same bear from whom I had escaped the day before. The moment he saw me he poked his snout over my narrow bed-place, but I was too far down for him to get at me, notwithstanding all the efforts he made to effect that object. Still it was not pleasant to have such a watcher over my couch, as I could not help dreading that he might possibly get his claws in and pull me out, and that at all events the moment I sat upright he would give me an embrace, but anything but a friendly one. The moon came out and shone on his bearish eyes, and I saw him licking his jaws in anticipation of his expected repast. the very way he did this convinced me that he was my friend of yesterday.

I had outwitted him once, and I determined to try and outwit him again. Glancing hastily around, I saw near me a tree with short branches, reaching close down almost to the ground. I thought that if I could climb up it, I might get out of the reach of my persecutor. Mustering all my strength, I suddenly started up, shrieking out at the top of my voice, and flourishing my stick, which I brought down with all my force on the bear's head. Bruin so little expected the assault that, without attempting to attack me he turned round and trotted off to the distance of forty yards or so, when he stopped and looked very intently at me. I seized the moment of my emancipation to climb up the tree nearest me. The bear, the instant he saw me take to flight, uttering a deep growl, sprang eagerly back to the foot of the tree; but I was beyond his reach. What, therefore, was my dismay to see him put his huge arms and legs round the trunk and begin to ascend. Up

he came, and as he advanced, I ascended higher and higher. Every now and then he looked up at me, and performed the to me unpleasant ceremony of licking his jaws. He was a cautious brute, for, as he got higher, he felt the boughs and shook them, to ascertain if he could trust his weight on them. I at last was obliged to retreat along a wide extending bough, from which I could just reach my enemy's head as he came near me. I shouted and banged away with all my might, which so annoyed him that he gave up the chase. The moment I saw him hesitate I redoubled my blows, and at last, infinitely to my satisfaction, not liking the treatment he was receiving, he began slowly to descend the way he had come up. I shouted and poked at him, but nothing would hurry him. At last he reached the bottom, but instead of going away, he sat himself down to watch me. Then we were just like the fox and crow in the fable. I the crow, and he the fox, only he wanted to get me instead of the cheese. I sat on my bough flourishing my stick at him, and at last he grew tired of watching me; but he did not go away—not he. My astonishment was not small, to see him crawl into the bed-place I had left, and quietly roll himself up and go to sleep. He must have slept, however, with one eye open, for whenever I commenced descending from my bough he popped up his head as much as to say, "You had better not, or I'll be after you," and then down he lay again. As I could not have made much progress in the uncertain light of the moon, I climbed into a forked tree, and tying my arm to a bough that I might not tumble off, I tried to get a little more sleep. It was not very sound, for the recollection that the bear might possibly take it into his head to pay me a visit kept me wakeful. I felt certain that the rascal must have known that my powder was wet, or he would not have been so impudent. Once or twice I thought that I would try and make my rifle go off, and I withdrew the charge of small shot, and put a bullet in instead. At last I took aim and pulled the trigger, but no report followed.

I was thankful that I had not had to depend on my weapon for my life. Bruin just lifted up his head when he heard the snap, but seeing that I was safe, lay down again, and began either to snore, or pretend to snore, for the cunning rogue was up to any trick, I was certain of that, to deceive me. For half-an-hour or more after this I lay quiet, and I had great hopes that Bruin had really gone to sleep. The country to the west along the banks of the stream appeared as far as I could see with the moonlight, pretty clear. I thought that I might make good some distance before the bear awoke. Down I crept very cautiously, for fear of making the slightest noise, from my lofty perch. I had got to one of the lower forks of the tree, and was considering whether I could not drop without much noise to the ground, from a branch which projected below me, when a low growl proceeded from my recent bed-place, and the ogre lifted up his head with one eye still shut, but with the other turned towards me in the most malicious manner,—at least, so I thought. I cannot quite vouch for this last fact; but that was my impression at the time. I was in a most uncomfortable position, so that I had to move one way or the other. I began by moving downwards, and then he rose more, and gave another growl. I then climbed up again, and as I ascended higher and higher, he gradually lay back till his head was concealed inside the hollow tree. Still, when I leaned forward, I could see his snout sticking up, and could just catch the twinkle of his wicked eye turned towards me—I mean the eye which, awake or asleep, as it seem to me, he always kept open. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that I did not sleep very soundly, still I did go to sleep, with my arms twined tightly round two neighboring boughs. I longed for daylight, which might enable me to take some active measures one way or the other. At last, as I looked out beyond the tops of the neighboring trees, I could see a pale pink and yellow hue suffusing the eastern sky, and the light crept forward, as it were, on one side, while the forest on the other remained shrouded in darkness. Not as in our own land, however, did

the birds welcome the coming sun with a full chorus of song. They were not altogether silent; but even in that spring time of the year they only exhibited their pleasure by a faint un tuneful twittering and chirping. Bruin was, I found, an early riser. I saw first one leg come out of his bed-place, then another, as he stretched them forth; then up went his arms, and I heard a loud yawn. It was rather more like a grunt. Then he began to growl, and to make all sorts of other strange noises, and finally he lifted up his head and gradually sat upright on his haunches. He winked at me when he saw that I was safe up the tree, and I fancied he nodded his head as much as to say, "Stay a bit, I'll soon be up to you. Then he turned one leg out of the bed-place and then another, and then he walked up to the tree, and sat himself down under it, and began to growl.

CHAPTER XXI.

I exhaust Bruin's patience—Manufacture some fishing-lines, and descend from my perch in the tree—Catch a big fish to my great joy, with no little trouble, and cook it—Many a slip between the spit and the lip—My fish is admirably dressed but it disappears, though not down my throat—I set to work again and catch more fish—Continue my journey; am almost starved—My ammunition exhausted—See some horses—Fall in with some Indians—They prove to be friends—Accompany me on my journey, and conduct me to the camp of the Raggets—Their expressions of gratitude to my guides—We reach California, where I terminate the adventures which I now give to the public.

I DO not mind confessing that I felt anything but happy perched up at the top of a tree in that wild American forest, with a hungry and cunning bear growling away for his breakfast below me. I too was beginning to feel faint for want of food. The bear seemed to know that, and to have hopes of starving me into submission. On that point, however, I determined to disappoint him. Sooner than go down and be eaten I resolved to die up in the tree, and then he would get nothing but my dry bones for his pains. I tried his patience I saw, for he growled and growled louder and more fiercely, and then began to lick his paws, as a baby does its fingers to amuse itself when hungry. Two or three times he began to climb up the tree; but the way in which I flourished the pole in his face, and the recollection that he could not reach me at the end of the branch to which I retired, made him speedily again descend. The sun was now up and warm, and it struck me that if I could dry some of my powder I might turn the tables on him, and eat him instead of his eating me. I therefore cleared out a hollow in a branch, into which I poured a charge of powder,

and then cleaned my rifle and picked out the touch-hole. I was determined not to be idle, and so, remembering my fish-hooks, I set to work to manufacture a line. The threads were short, but I knotted them neatly. I tried the strength of each one separately, and those which broke I strengthened with line, which I twisted up. I thus sat knotting and spinning, with as much coolness as I could command, till I had finished my line, and thought my powder was dry. I then put up my line, carefully loaded my rifle, and muttered, "Now, Master Bruin, look out for yourself." Whether he divined what I was about, or had grown tired of waiting for his breakfast and was going elsewhere in search of it, I cannot say, but before I could find a satisfactory rest for my piece, so as to point it down at him, he turned round and began trotting briskly away. I instantly fired, in the hopes of obtaining some bear steaks for my breakfast. The rifle went off, nearly knocking me over from my bough, and the ball hit him, but not in a vital part, for on he went growling furiously, till he was lost to sight in the depths of the forest, and I must say that I heartily hoped I might never see his ugly face again. I suspect that I considerably damped his appetite for breakfast. As mine was sharper than ever, and I could not make it off bear, I descended from my perch that I might try and catch some fish. I quickly cut a fishing-rod, and a piece of light bark to serve as a float, in a few moments, having caught some creatures on the bank to serve as bait, I was bending over the stream as assiduously as old Izaak Walton himself.

What was my delight in a few minutes to feel a bite! I was an expert fisherman, but so great was my agitation that I could scarcely give the necessary jerk to hook my fish. It is very different fishing for pleasure than fishing for the pot or spit when starving. Away went the float bobbing down the stream. It must be done. I jerked up my rod. How breathless I felt! The fish was hooked, of that I was sure, as also that he was a good-sized fellow. Down the stream swam the fish, and along the bank I followed him. I knew that my tackle was not over

strong, and I was anxious to secure a good place for landing him. At last I reached a flat rock. "Now I will have him," I said to myself, and I drew his nose up the stream. I got sight of him through the clear water. He was a trout, three or four pounds weight at least. What a hearty breakfast I would make of him! I felt very nervous, because as there was very little bend in my rod, if he gave a sudden jerk he would too probably snap the line or the hook, and be out of my sight for ever. The water was somewhat deep below me, or I should have pushed into the stream and clutched him in my arms, much in the same way as the bear would have clutched me, if he could, and with the same object. Slowly and cautiously I drew him nearer and nearer the shore. He came along pretty quietly. He was pretty well exhausted with his previous swim. Had I possessed a landing-net I could have had him ashore in a moment; but I trembled when I thought of the little pliability there was at the end of my stick to counteract any sudden jerk he might give. There he was, scarcely six feet from me and yet I could not reach him. I drew him still closer, kneeling down as I did so, and then lowering my rod I made a dart at him. He was quicker than I was, and with a whisk of his tail off he darted, with the hook still in his mouth, dragging the rod after him. I made a dash at the rod, but missed it, and away it floated down the stream. After it I went though, watching it as it bobbed up and down, and dreading lest it should catch fast among some stones, and the fish break away. The stream was here narrow, deep and rapid. Lower down it was broader, and I hoped might be shallow. I ran on, therefore, and found it as I hoped. Down came the rod towards me. "Was the fish on it, though?" I seized hold of the butt-end and lifted it up. Yes, there he was. He could scarcely escape me now. Slowly I drew him up toward me, and slipping my fingers down the line, eagerly seized him by the gills. I had him fast, and was not likely to let him go. I carried him on shore, and throwing him on the ground speedily, began to collect sticks to make a fire. Those near at hand would not

burn, so I went further away from the stream to collect some more.

While thus engaged, I saw a lynx steal out of the forest and go in the direction of my proposed fire. I had collected as many sticks as I could carry, and was returning as fast as I could, when I saw the lynx go close up to where I had left my fish. It stooped down and then trotted on. I rushed on, as as fast as my legs could carry me, till I reached the spot. My fish was gone. I shrieked and shouted after the lynx, whirling my stick at him, but it was to no purpose. He had found a good breakfast, and was not going to give it up in a hurry. I shouted and shrieked, and ran and ran, till at length I knocked my foot against the sharp end of a broken branch which brought me crying out with pain to the ground. The lynx, holding the fish in his jaws, turned a look of derision at me, as he disappeared in the forest. Did I lie there and howl like a wounded dog? No; I should be ashamed to acknowledge it, had I done so. Instead of that, as soon as the pain would allow me, I got up on my feet, hobbled back to where I had left my rod, searched for some fresh bait, and set to work to catch another fish. Not a minute had passed before I got another bite. I quickly hooked my fish, and hauled up one of about a half a pound weight. As that would not be sufficient for my breakfast, I thought it would be wise to restrain my appetite till I had caught some more, as possibly when the sun rose higher they might not bite so readily. Not half a minute passed before I caught a second, and in five minutes, with very little difficulty, I had caught as many fish as would equal the weight of the one I had lost. This time I took care to keep them about me till I had lighted my fire, and stuck them on sticks roasting around it. I kept, too, vigilant watch lest my old enemy, Bruin, or the watchful lynx should return to rob me of my repast. One of the fish was soon sufficiently warmed to enable me to eat it, and one after the other disappeared, giving me a satisfaction which the most highly seasoned feast has never been able to afford. I washed the fish down with a

copious draught of water, and then felt myself ready for anything. This part of the river was evidently well supplied with fish, so before leaving it I again took my rod in hand, and in half-an-hour caught enough fish to last me for a couple of days. I had lost my hat in the river, so I now made myself a curious conical-shaped head-covering with some rushes and long grass, and what with my bare legs, my feet swathed in bandages, and my sleeveless jacket, I must have had a very Robinson Crusoe appearance. As there was no one to see me, this was of no consequence.

I now shouldered my pole and fishing-rod, and with my rifle slung at my back, continued my course. I kept down the stream for some way; but as I had not passed the tracks which my friends must have left, I felt convinced that they were to the north of the line on which I had been travelling. I therefore crossed the stream by a ford, at which I arrived in the afternoon, and with much regret left its pure waters to wander into what might prove an arid desert. I had, unfortunately, nothing in which I could carry water, so that I had to depend on the supply which I might find in my path. I pushed on as fast as I could. It was almost night, however, before I reached a pool of water. It was stagnant, and tasted so bad that I could only moisten my lips with it, after I had cooked and eaten one of my fish. A number of birch trees were growing near. I quickly built a shanty with their bark, and with the same material formed myself a mattress and an ample covering for my body. After my long vigil on the previous night I speedily fell asleep, but even in my slumbers I heard the occasional serenades of bears and wolves, who seemed to be the principal inhabitants of that wild region. I awoke more than once and was convinced that the noise was a reality, and not the fancy of my brain; but I felt that unless they had come and routed me out, as the bear had on the previous night, nothing would have induced me to stir. Off I went to sleep; and much to my satisfaction day returned without any of them having found me out. I need not record the adventures of each day.

I suffered so much from my feet that my progress was of necessity slow. My fish were gone. I had found no other friendly stream; but I had hoped to come across one before long. I had dried the remnant of my powder. I had enough for one full charge and a little over. I loaded my rifle, still wishing, if possible, to keep it for my defence. This was early one morning. I had had no breakfast. As the day advanced I grew very hungry. A small animal like a hare or rabbit, came near me. I seized a stone at my foot and hit the creature on the leg, and broke it. Away it went limping, still at a rapid pace. I made chase as fast as my sore feet would let me. I was gaining on the creature; but was afraid that, after all, it might get into some hole and escape me. This made me exert myself still more, when I caught sight of a burrow ahead, for which I suspected it was making. I sprang on, hunger giving an impetus to my feet, and not a yard from the spot I threw myself forward and caught it, as it was about to spring into the hole. The poor creature turned an imploring look at me; but like a savage, as I felt, I speedily squeezed the life out of it, and in another ten minutes I had it skinned and roasting away before a fire of sticks, which I had in the meantime collected. I felt as I ate the creature, what reason I had to trust in the care of Providence, for each time, when most in want, I had been amply supplied with food, and I doubt not that, had I possessed some botanical knowledge, I should have found a still larger store of provisions in the productions of earth. The creature was rather lean, so that the best half of him only served me for a meal, and I finished the remainder at night.

The next day I was less fortunate. Towards the evening, as I was proceeding along an elevated ridge, I saw in the valley below me a black spot, as if a fire had been there. I hurried down to the place; I was not mistaken. There where the charred embers of sticks, and round it were scattered the half-picked bones of grouse, partridges, and ducks, as if a numerous party had camped there. I looked about, but could find nothing to indicate that they were my friends. Hunger made

me do what I should not otherwise have fancied. I collected all the bones, and with a pile of sticks, left by my predecessors on the spot, I made a fire, at which I speedily cooked them. As there was plenty of birch bark about, I then built a wigwam and formed a comfortable couch within it, in which I might pass the night. These bones were all the food I got that day. Several deer had on the previous day come skipping around me, fearless of the approach of man. The next day again hunger assailed me. I had been wishing that some more deer would come, when a herd came racing by, and when they saw me they all stopped, staring at me, as if to ask why I had come there. The pangs of hunger just then made me very uncomfortable. Here was an opportunity of supplying myself with food for a week to come. A fat buck stood in the centre; I fired. The whole herd were in full flight, but the buck was wounded, I saw by the drops of blood which marked his track; I hurried after him. What was my delight to see him stop, then stagger and fall; I ran on. He rose and sprang forward, but it was a last effort, and the next moment he rolled over on the ground. I could have shouted for joy. I had now got food in abundance, and what was of great consequence to my ultimate preservation, the means of covering my feet. I finished the poor animal with a blow of my hatchet, and then set to work to skin him and cut him up. I had one drawback to my satisfaction. There was no wood or water near. I therefore cut off as much of the hide as would serve me for moccasins and leggings, loaded myself with all the flesh I could carry, and struck away towards the west. I had been unable to follow up the tracks which led from my last sleeping-place, and this convinced me that the camp had been formed by Indians. Whether they would prove friends or foes, should I fall in with them, was a question. At all events, I felt rather an inclination to avoid than to find them out. At length I came to a wood, through which ran a stream of pure water. Sticks were quickly collected, a fire was lit, and some of my deer was roasting away. While it was cooking, I ran down to

the stream to take a draught of water and to wash my feet, and then hurried back to enjoy my repast. I did enjoy it; and as there were still two hours more of daylight, and I felt my strength increased, I hurried onward.

Scarcely had I got again into open country than I came on some recent tracks of horses. Could my friends be ahead? There was no wheel tracks though. A beaten track appeared. It must lead somewhere. I had got half a mile when I fancied that I heard the neighing of a horse. My heart thumped away in my breast. I listened with breathless attention. Again a horse neighed loudly. I could not be mistaken, and hurrying on I saw across a rapid stream, which passed at the base of the hill on which I found myself, a whole herd of those noble animals frisking about in a wide rich meadow spread out before me. I hurried down the hill, and by the aid of my pole, though not without difficulty, hurried across the stream. One of the horses as quick as I landed came trotting up to me; but seeing that I was a stranger, and rather an odd looking one too, off he went again. I thought how satisfactory it would be if I could catch one of them to make it carry me the rest of my journey. I remembered, however, that the animals must belong to some one. Perhaps the owners might lend one to me. Crossing the meadow, I saw before me a wreath of smoke gracefully curling up among the trees. It must proceed from human habitation. Was it from the hut of a white man or from the temporary encampment of Indians? If the latter, would they prove friends or foes! Knowing the necessity for precaution, I hid myself behind every bush and tree, till I got into the wood, and then I advanced with equal care, looking out ahead before I left my shelter, and stooping down in Indian fashion, trailing my rifle and stick after me as I made my onward way.

I soon came to an open glade, in one corner of which appeared a skin covered wigwam, before the entrance to which sat two squaws busily engaged in some culiary occupation. If found looking about I might naturally have been suspected

of treacherous intentions, so slinging my rifle, and grasping my pole and fishing-rod in one hand, I advanced, holding out the other. The old women looked up, and uttered a few grunts, but seemed in no way alarmed. What they took me for I do not know. I must have seemed to them rather a strange character, I had advanced a few paces when two men sprang out of the hut. This was the trying moment. Greatly to my satisfaction, they stretched out their hands in a friendly way as I hobbled on towards them. Though they had painted faces and were dressed in skins, I saw by the kind expression of their countenances that they comiserated my condition. Blood was even then streaming from my feet. At once they lifted me up in their arms and carried me into the hut, where they placed me on a couch of skins, and the old women brought water from the river which flowed close by, and washed my feet and bound them up in salves. The pain from which I had so long been suffering quickly disappeared. They then brought me a piece of salmon, which I thought delicious, and some, which, under other circumstances, I might have thought suspicious. This, with some roots which they roasted, made up a repast more than I had eaten for a long time.

I could not speak a word of their language, nor did they understand English, but I tried by signs to make them comprehend that I had parted from my companions, and that I wished to get to them. At last they appeared to fancy that they comprehended me, for they nodded and smiled, and uttered the same sounds of satisfaction over and over again. They signified, however, by their gestures, that I must sleep in the hut that night, but that on the following morning, as soon as the sun rose, we would set off on our journey. I offered them the deer's flesh which I had slung about me, and which they seemed to value. Just before dark, however, they brought me in another salmon, which I preferred to the somewhat high-flavored meat. I cannot describe how I enjoyed that night's rest. I had perfect confidence in my hosts, and I had no longer the dread of being visited by a wandering bear or prowling wolf.

I felt like a new being when, next morning, the good-natured Indians roused me from my slumbers. The rushing sound of waters invited me to take a bath, and going down to the river, I stretched my limbs with a pleasant swim, and then returned to enjoy a hearty breakfast on salmon, roots, and some decoction which served the purpose of tea. My hosts, too, had provided some new moccasins in which to shield my feet. It was a completely patriarchal establishment. There was an old father and four sons, with and old mother, and another old woman and the wives of the younger men, and eight or ten children. The skin-covered huts of the younger couple were close at hand under the trees. The old man and his eldest son now brought up three horses, they mounted me on one, and they leaped on the others. A deer skin served as a saddle, and rough thongs of leather as a bridle. I wished all the family a hearty good-bye, resolved in future to think better of Indians than I had done, and off we set. How delightful it was to move along over the prairie at the rate of eight or ten miles an hour, instead of creeping along with suffering feet, as I had been so long doing! I travelled on two whole days on a westerly course with my Indian friends. I could not hold much conversation with my guides, except by signs, but we soon appeared to understand each other perfectly well. I made out that we were approaching the camp of my old companions, and as I drew nearer my eagerness increased to be once more among them. At length I saw wreaths of smoke curling up from a valley below us. They must proceed from a considerable encampment. The Indians and I rode on in silence, till I heard voices, which I judged came from the spot where I had seen the smoke ascending. Presently a boy, whom I recognized as one of the emigrant's children, ran back, shouting out, "Injens—Injens!" His cries brought out the Raggets, and a number of my friends with their rifles in their hands, ready to do battle in case of necessity. They saw that we were peaceably disposed; but they did not recognize me till I was in the middle of them, and had addressed them by name.

I was most cordially welcomed. In truth, most all of them had given me up for lost. They also showed that they placed some value on me by loading my Indian friends down with presents.

I am sorry to say that I must bring my adventures in the Far West to a conclusion. We struck our tents next morning, and continued our journey. After a variety of adventures we reached California, and at once proceeded to the gold diggings. Most of the party separated and worked for themselves. The Raggets kept together, and were the only family who succeeded in securing an independence. For myself I will say nothing, but that I was thankful to find myself back in old England, if not a richer, I hope at all events a wiser man, than when I left its deservedly well-loved shores.

THE END.